

GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: **Spring 2009**
Instructor: David G. Schultenover, S.J.
Course #: THEO 281
Course Title: The Roman Catholic Modernist Crisis

Content:

In 1921 W. B. Yeats penned his ominous line, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold." This line echoes Vatican fears unleashed by the French Revolution, other European revolutions, and wholesale challenges to longstanding authorities, traditions, and conventional knowledge during the 19th century. Crises of consciousness—social, political, religious—appear at every period of rapid change. This is the context in which the so-called "Modernist Crisis" played out in the Roman Catholic Church from ca. 1895 to 1914 when certain theologians tried to nudge the Church into dialog with the rapidly changing modern world. Prodded by historical-critical studies of Scripture and church history, "modernist" theologians investigated virtually every important fundamental religious question: our idea of God, the nature of faith, how God reveals, how the Scriptures are inspired, how God acts in history, the nature of the Church, the relationship between Christianity and other religions, the relative value of different religions, the conflicts between faith and reason, religion and science, church and state, and the nature of religious authority. Pope Pius X condemned the "modernists" and required an oath of submission from all the Church's philosophers, theologians, and clergy. The questions, forced underground, resurfaced at Vatican II. Similar questions have resurfaced in the current period of rapid change.

John Courtney Murray, a peritus at Vatican II, summed up what happened there: "In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the movement away from the classical mentality toward historical consciousness came to an immediate term in modernism, that 'compendium of all heresies.' The Church rejected this term, flatly and uncompromisingly. This was altogether necessary. Unfortunately, however, the Church also rejected the movement itself. This was not necessary, as now we know. Happily the Declaration on Religious Freedom (Vatican II) signified the acceptance of the movement. The whole document is permeated by historical consciousness, just as the opposition to it had its deepest roots, not so much in an opposing theory of religious freedom, but in the classical mentality."

A historical appreciation of Roman Catholic Modernism, therefore, will aid a probing appreciation of fundamental religious questions for today's world. In other words, this course is about much more than Roman Catholic Modernism and will be of interest to all students of theology regardless of religious affiliation.

Format:

After an introductory lecture, the course will follow the seminar format.

Department of Theology

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- Students will prepare assigned readings for each discussion, submit a one-page précis of the readings with salient questions for discussion, and take turns leading the discussion.
- One research paper of 20-25 pages on a leading “modernist” or “anti-modernist.”

Language Pre-requisites:

- The primary languages of the Modernist and anti-Modernists writings were English, French, German, Italian, and Latin. Of these, French and English are the most important. While students will be encouraged to exercise themselves in these languages, only English will be required.

Required Texts: (Selected pages TBA) In-print editions will be available at BookMarg (but most are available from online antiquarian dealers)

- Darrell Jodock, ed. *Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context*. Cambridge University, 2000. Pp. 1-112.
 - Marvin R. O’Connell. *Critics on Trial: An Introduction to the Catholic Modernist Crisis*. Catholic University of America, 1994; pbk ed. 1995.
 - Alfred Firmin Loisy. *The Gospel and the Church*. Prometheus, 1988 (or other edition).
 - Gabriel Daly. *Transcendence and Immanence: A Study in Catholic Modernism and Integralism*. Oxford University, 1980.
 - Joseph Komonchak, “Modernity and the Construction of Roman Catholicism,” *Cristianesimo nella storia* 18 (1997) 353-85. BR140 .C74
 - Marie-Joseph Lagrange. *Père Lagrange: Personal Reflections and Memoirs*. Paulist, 1985.
 - George Tyrrell. *Tradition and the Critical Spirit: Catholic Modernist Writings*. Selected and introduced by James C. Livingston. Fortress, 1991.
- Pius X, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis* of 8 September 1907, in *Papal Encyclicals*, ed. Claudia Carlen, [REF BX860 C37 (1981)].

Optional texts:

- David G. Schultenover, S.J., *A View from Rome: On the Eve of the Modernist Crisis*. Fordham University, 1993.