GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2014
Instructor: Dr. Patrick Carey
Course #: THEO 8440
Course Title: American Catholic Theology

Content:

Within the American context, Catholics as well as Protestants have had to come to theological terms with religious and cultural pluralism, religious liberty, separation of church and state, voluntaryism, and republicanism—to name a few characteristics of the American experience. American Catholic as well as American Protestant theology has likewise been affected by the major intellectual movements in American and European history (e.g., Enlightenment, Romanticism, Liberalism and Modernism, Social Gospel, Neo-Orthodoxy, Neo-Thomism, and varieties of Post-Vatican II theologies). To study theology in the United States, one should know something of the Catholic as well as Protestant and pluralistic culture in which that study takes place. This course focuses on the Catholic theological tradition in the United States.

Some have argued that within this context American Catholics did not develop a theological tradition (until most recently). It is the argument of this course that a Catholic theological tradition was indeed evolving from the time of John Carroll (1780s) to the present, but that historians and theologians have paid little attention to it. It is the purpose of this course, therefore, to (1) acquaint students with the general context in which American Catholic theology has developed, (2) demonstrate some of the major contributions they have made to questions of fundamental theology, ecclesiology, religious liberty, ecumenism, social thought, etc., (3) show how American Catholic theology dialogued in a variety of ways with the major currents in the American experience, and (4) to point out areas of American Catholic thought that are badly in need of more research.

The course investigates the thought of selected thinkers from the late eighteenth century to the present (e.g., John Carroll, John England, Orestes Brownson, Isaac Hecker, John Ryan, Virgil Michel, John C. Murray, Avery Dulles, David Tracy).

Format:

Lectures will be given on each of the major movements in American Catholicism. Selected readings from each of the major periods will then be discussed in class. The last few classes will be devoted to a discussion of student papers.

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- Three critical (2-double spaced pages) book reviews. One major research paper on a specific issue in a theologian’s work.

Language Pre-requisites:

- English required; Latin, German, French and/or Italian would be useful for research.