GRADUATE COURSE DESCRIPTION

Term: Spring 2011
Instructor: Patrick W. Carey
Course #: THEO 8450
Course Title: Special Questions in the History of Christian Thought
Course Sub-title: Avery Dulles: Theology in the Post Vatican II Era

Content:

This course is an examination of the theology of Avery Dulles, SJ. (1918-2008). Dulles was one of the most prolific and significant American Catholic theologians in the era after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65). His reputation was international as well as national. No other American theologian, Protestant or Catholic, has had as many essays and books translated into multiple foreign languages. Examining his theology is a good entrance into the emerging theology of the post Vatican II period because he was in dialogue with a good number of the most important Protestant and Catholic theologians of his time. Although he was aware of some important twentieth century Orthodox theologians, his dialogue was not primarily in that direction. Dulles was known as an ecclesiologist and ecumenist, but, in my view, his most important theological work was in the areas of the theology of faith and revelation. He considered himself, first of all, a fundamental theologian, and that is what he was.

This course will focus on his ecclesiology in dialogue with other ecclesiologies, his work in the ecumenical movement (especially in the Lutheran/Catholic dialogue, and the informal Protestant Evangelical/Catholic dialogue), his work on the theology of revelation in dialogue with various models of revelation in Protestant and Catholic history, and his theology of faith in the context of his examination of the changing concepts of faith throughout Christian history. The course will encourage students to examine his work in comparison with the thought of other post Vatican II Protestant and Catholic theologians who focused on similar issues in theology.

Format:

After some initial introductory lectures on the historical context, students will discuss some of Dulles’ major seminal essays and three of his major works on ecclesiology, revelation, and faith. On occasion students will lead the discussion of specific texts assigned for reading. The course will conclude with a discussion of student research papers probing issues raised in the readings and in class discussions.

Assignments and/or Examinations:

- This is primarily and reading and discussion course. Students will be required to lead discussions and to participate actively in them. No examinations are part of this course. The major responsibility is for a research paper on a topic to be discussed with the professor.

Language Pre-requisites:

- English. French, German, and Italian are also helpful because Dulles wrote at times in French, and a few of his lectures in Europe are published only in German, French, or Italian.