

Theo 265: The Sacraments

Core Area Knowledge: Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge

Course Description:

This course studies the realities of Christian faith life as expressed in the concrete rituals of the Christian communities. Sacraments are more than just mechanical ways in which to experience God in Christian liturgy--what has been traditionally defined as "a visible sign of an invisible reality." Indeed, the seven sacraments of the Catholic tradition are only privileged theological/liturgical expressions of a way of interpreting reality. This course will examine what is called a "sacramental imagination" as a way to get at the theological assumptions that are such a large part of the Catholic spiritual tradition. By studying the historical development, central beliefs and communal practices of the sacraments, students will learn to articulate the nature of the sacramental system in Catholic worship, and to define the key concepts and religious practices that are part of the discourse of sacramental theology.

Knowledge Area(s) satisfied:	Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge
Skill(s) Developed:	Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions
Values Requirement(s) satisfied:	Understanding Diversity in US and World Understanding Spirituality/Faith in Action

Learning Outcomes:

This course will develop competency in the area of "Theological and Religious Studies Knowledge." By successfully passing this course, students will:

- Learn to analyze and interpret religious texts, including scriptural texts, using standard scholarly methods and tools.
- Demonstrate knowledge, with attention to historical development, of the central texts, beliefs, ethical understanding, and ritual practices of Catholicism.
- Demonstrate how a sacramental system of aesthetics is often embedded in cultural artifacts such as poetry, music, painting, literature, and film.
- Recognize and interpret the impact of history and cultures on the development of Christian doctrine and practices.

Skills Addressed in this Class: Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions

- Comprehend, paraphrase, summarize, and contextualize the meaning of varying forms of communication, including, but not limited to: written work (fiction and non-fiction), film, visual art, multimedia, and music.
- Evaluate theological ideas by comparing the points of view of Patristic, Medieval, modern and contemporary scholars on ideas about the sacraments and learn how these can be understood in relation to their historical context.
- Generate ideas, hypotheses, opinions, questions, and proposals that help to articulate and synthesize information about sacramental theology and its significance in contemporary religious faith.
- Monitor individual thinking or behavior in order to question, confirm, validate, or correct it. By reading the various authors, by listening to the instructor, by viewing films that illustrate major theological ideas on the sacraments, the student will be required to reflect on their own ideas about the sacraments and to articulate their ideas in clear and reasoned ways.

Values Addressed in this Class: Understanding Diversity in the United States or the World Understanding Spirituality/Faith in Action in the World

- This course satisfies the value of "understanding diversity in the United States or the World." It does this by investigating the various churches within the Christian tradition, especially Catholicism, focusing on the diverse ways in which sacraments are understood in religion. Students will come to see the complex diversity in the ways that Christian communities around the world comprehend and celebrate rites of passage, especially the rites of initiation, marriage, reconciliation and death and dying.
- This course satisfies the value of "understanding spirituality or faith in action in the world." Students

learn to articulate the foundation of the religious traditions they study. They develop the ability to reflect on how these faith systems and rituals relate to the intellectual and cultural life of people today (e.g., Christian marriage practice and ritual customs, beliefs about relationships between human persons, beliefs about the illness, healing, reconciliation). Finally they encourage both men and women students to reflect on the applications of these beliefs and traditions for their own life, inviting them to discern their own personal relationship to religious faith and the religious faith of others.

Texts/Media:

Sacraments: a New Understanding (2001)

Signatures of Grace (2000)

The Catholic Imagination (2000)

Wit

Packet: short stories/poems

Films

Ray. R. Noll

Thomas Grady and Paula Huston, editors

Andrew Greeley

Margaret Edson

Assessment and Learning Activities:

Primarily lecture and notes, reading of fiction and analyzing film, with discussion of reading assignments, short quizzes or take-home writing assignments concerning prepared readings.

1. Five Essays, 3-4 typed pages in length, each worth 10% of final course grade (taken together, they are 50% of your course grade). There will be seven essay assignments, each roughly corresponding to the seven sacraments, and you can choose any five of them listed in the syllabus.
2. Quiz/take-home writing assignments, accumulatively worth 30% of final course grade.
3. Final Exam/Take-home Paper, worth 20% of final course grade. Exam will be based on course lecture notes and reading, and on one's critical analysis of a film that concludes the course.

How Assignment Address the Knowledge and Skills Objectives Listed Above:

In this class we will explore and critically evaluate sacramental theology, both in its historical unfolding and in the contemporary world. Your grade will be based on your performance on papers, quizzes, final take-home exam/paper and class participation. These assignment are intended to assess not only your acquisition of information related to sacramental theology, but also your ability to analyze critically your own religious experience and those of others, your ability to understand and communicate the meaning of various ways that ritual has been expressed in the Christian tradition, your ability to generate new ideas around the central beliefs and practices of the tradition, and your ability to relate the issues in this course to the contemporary world.

Essay Assignments on the Seven Sacraments:

The essay assignment for each sacrament differs greatly, asking different questions and demanding different resources to answer them. Indeed, the focus of the essays falls under many genres of writing and reflection, some being historical analysis, some personal reflection, etc. You must choose five of these assignments. See the course calendar for the due date of each assignment. Some will probably take more time and effort than others, but I want you to vary the way you think about each sacrament and how it is understood or embodied in a cultural context. For each assignment, I will hand out a sheet with the two or three options for the essay. As an overview, here are the following genres of writing used for the essays:

Marriage:

Eucharist:

Baptism:

Confirmation:

Anointing of the Sick:

Reconciliation:

Holy Orders:

Interview format with assessment

Review of book/article concerning the Eucharist

Compare/Contrast analysis of Catholic and non-Catholic initiation rites

Personal reflection on one's sacred/secular "coming of age" rites

Critical Response to book/film, *Wit*

Researched analysis on a historical aspect of the sacrament

Position paper on issues surrounding Holy Orders

Essays and Final Exam Paper:

All essays and take-home assignments and final exam should be typed, double-spaced with one inch margins, and prepared using a 12 point font size.

Attendance Expectations/Absence Policy:

Factors concerning final grade include frequent absences or late appearance in class, leaving class early, failure to respect others' rights to speak their views, lack of any contribution in discussion, and starting side conversations or failing to pay attention in class. Absences from class sessions can affect the student's final course grade as follows:

- 0-4 absences __ no negative effect on final semester grade
- 5 absences _ final semester grade reduced by 5%
- 6 absences—final semester grade reduced by 10%
- 7 absences—final semester grade reduced by 25%\

Absence due to University business (academic trip, athletic travel, etc.) or for religious observance will not count against the absence total, but please alert me beforehand. Students who miss a class session for any reason are still responsible for the assignments, handouts or material covered during that session.

Late/Missed Assignments and Incompletes:

Late essays lose 10% for each class day they are late, up to the third class day after the due date. After that point, they will not be accepted and a grade of **0** will be recorded for that assignment. Incomplete grades for the semester are only in the event of a major medical or family emergency. In addition, no incomplete grade will be granted unless the student has attended at least 80% of the class sessions and completed 80% of the course work before the end of the semester.

Quizzes cannot be made up unless the student is absent on University business, religious observance, or as the result of a medical or family emergency. Students who come late to class after a quiz has concluded will not be permitted to make it up.

Plagiarism:

Evidence that an assignment, or a portion of an assignment, is not the student's own work and has been submitted without proper citations, will result in a grade of **0** for that assignment. A second occurrence during the semester will result in a failing grade for the course. Note that if a second occurrence of plagiarism does occur, the dean's office will be immediately notified, as well the department chair, where the **F** will be entered in the university records.

Course Calendar: *Note that the calendar is subject to slight changes as I see fit.*

Date	Class Activities/Readings	Assignment
8/30	Course Introduction	Greeley 1-22
9/1	Video: Kieslowski's <i>Decalogue One</i>	Noll 5-16, writing assignment on <i>Decalogue</i>
9/3	Lecture/discussion	Noll 19-30, Disk File #5
9/6	No Class-Labor Day	
9/8	Lecture/discussion	Noll 35-43, Disk File #7
9/10	Lecture/discussion	Grady 220-232
9/13	Quiz 1 , Lecture/discussion	Noll 79-95, Greeley 111-135, Essay 1
9/15	Lecture/discussion	Grady 131-163
9/17	Lecture/discussion	Greeley 55-88
9/20	<i>Moonstruck</i>	
9/22	<i>Moonstruck</i> continued	
9/24	<i>Moonstruck</i> , Essay 1/Marriage due	Writing assignment on <i>Moonstruck</i>
9/27	Lecture/discussion	Noll 47-57
9/29	Lecture/discussion	Grady 69-97, Disk File #9
10/1	Lecture/discussion	Essay 2
10/4	Quiz 2 , Film: <i>Babette's Feast</i>	
10/6	<i>Babette's Feast</i> continued	
10/8	<i>Babette's Feast</i>	Handout (F. O'Connor's <i>A Temple...</i>)
10/11	No Class-Mid semester break	
10/13	Lecture, Essay 2/Eucharist due	Writing assignment on <i>Babette</i>
10/15	Lecture/discussion	Noll 59-75, Grady 1-33
10/18	Lecture/discussion	Handout (F. O'Connor's <i>The River</i>), Essay 3
10/20	Lecture/discussion	Disk File #13
10/22	Quiz 3 , lecture/discussion	Grady 98-130, Essay 4
10/25	Lecture/discussion Essay 3/Baptism due	Noll 125-133
10/27	Lecture/discussion	Grady 193-218, begin the play <i>Wit</i>
10/29	Lecture, Essay 4/Confirmation due	Greeley 159-170, finish the play <i>Wit</i>
11/1	Quiz 4 , Lecture/discussion	Essay 5
11/3	Video presentation of <i>Wit</i>	
11/5	<i>Wit</i> continued	Noll 111-123
11/8	Lecture, Essay 5/Anointing due	Grady 34-68
11/10	Lecture/discussion	Handout (Dubus, <i>The Timing of Sin</i>)
11/12	Lecture/discussion	Writing assignment on <i>Timing of Sin</i>
11/15	Film: <i>Malena</i>	Essay 6
11/17	<i>Malena</i> continued	
11/19	<i>Malena</i>	Writing assignment on <i>Malena</i>
11/22	Lecture/discussion	Greeley 137-158
11/24	No Class-Thanksgiving	
11/26	No Class-Thanksgiving	
11/29	Lecture, Essay 6/Reconciliation due	Noll 97-109, Disk File # 18, Essay 7
12/1	Quiz 5 , Lecture/discussion	Grady 164-192
12/3	Lecture/discussion	Handout for film
12/6	Final/Film presentation	
12/8	Film continued	Writing assignment
12/10	Film, Essay 7/Holy Orders due	Final Exam take-home
12/14	Exam Day:	Take-home due in my office 12/14 before noon

