Course description: This course examines historical and theological background to Vatican Council II. Analysis of council documents emphasizing points of continuity and development with church teaching. Reception of the council’s teaching in the postconciliar church.

Course objectives:

1) To give the student a grasp of the major theological background to Vatican II: Neo-Thomism, the Modernist crisis, the Nouvelle théologie, and something of their historical contexts.

2) To acquaint the student with the events that led up to the council.

3) To acquaint the student with the documents of Vatican II and to provide a grasp of principal teachings of the council.

4) To examine the reception of the council in the postconciliar period and to gain a knowledge of the range of responses among Catholics to the council.

Course outline:


READ John O’Malley, What Happened at Vatican II, Introduction, ch. 1 & 2

Week 2: 1 September: Contexts: The nineteenth century and theology. The immediate context of Vatican II

The rise of Neo-Thomism.

The Modernist crisis: major issues and enduring effects

READ Gerald McCool, From Unity to Pluralism: The Internal Evolution of Thomism (Fordham UP), ch 1: “The Nineteenth-Century Heritage”, 5 – 38

READ “Roman Catholic Modernism” (from supplement to NCE)

(Copies of these may be found on reserve in the library)

Recommended: Darrell Jodock, ed., Catholicism Contending with Modernity: Roman Catholic Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Historical Context

Week 3: 8 Sept: The Nouvelle théologie and the events leading up to the council.

READ McCool, ch. 9: “The Explosion of Pluralism”, 200 – 233 (library copy)

Recommended: Jürgen Mettepenningen, Nouvelle Théologie, New Theology
Week 4: 15 Sept.: Overview of the four sessions, 1961-1965. The council’s teaching on the church: *Lumen Gentium* (Note: Documents are to be read for the class in which they are to be treated.)

READ John O’Malley, *What Happened at Vatican II*, ch. 3 & 4
Recommended: Richard Gaillardetz, *The Church in the Making*

Week 5: 22 Sept.: The church and ordained ministry: *Christus Dominus, Presbyterorum ordinis, Optatam totius.*

READ O’Malley, ch. 5 & 6
Course paper topic submitted for approval

Week 6: 29 Sept.: Religious life and the laity: *Perfectae caritatis, Apostolicam actuositatem;* The church as mission: *Ad gentes divinitus*

READ O’Malley, ch. 7 & conclusion
Recommended: Maryanne Confoy, *Religious Life and Priesthood*; Dolores Leckey, *The Laity and Christian Education*

Week 7: 6 October: The church (cont.): *Gaudium et spes*

Preliminary bibliography submitted for approval
Recommended: Norman Tanner, *The Church and the World*

Week 8: 13 October: Fall break


Recommended: Edris Cardinal Cassidy, *Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue*

Week 10: 27 Oct.: No class, instructor away.

READ Faggioli, ch. 1 - 3

Week 11: 3 November: The liturgy: *Sacrosanctum concilium.* The council’s teaching on divine revelation: *Dei verbum (Orientalium Ecclesiarum, Gravissimum educationis, Inter mirifica* will be treated via class notes; reading them is optional)

Recommended: Rita Ferrone, *Liturgy*; Ronald Witherup, *Scripture*

Week 12: 10 November: Interpreting the council

READ Faggioli, ch. 4 – 6 & epilogue

Week 13: 17 Nov.: Post-conciliar American Catholicism

**Course paper due**

READ Mark Massa, *The American Catholic Revolution*, Preface + ch. 1 and 2

Week 14: 24 Nov.: The post-conciliar Church (cont.)
Week 15: 1 December: The post-conciliar Church (cont.)
READ Massa, ch. 7 & 8

Final Exam: TBA

Course texts:


Mark Massa, *The American Catholic Revolution* (OUP, 2010)


Course evaluation: 1 exam (50% of final grade)
Course paper: A research paper on some aspect of the council’s teaching, on a topic to be approved by the instructor. (50%)

Recommended reading:

Theological background:

Thomas Hartley, *Thomistic Revival and the Modernist Era* (1971)
Gerald McCool, *Catholic Theology in the Nineteenth Century* (1977)
----, *The Neo-Thomists* (1994)
----, *From Unity to Pluralism* (1989)
Gabriel Daly, *Transcendence and Immanence* (1980)
R. Scott Appleby, “Church and Age Unite” (1992)
Raymond Bulman and Frederick Parrella, ed. *From Trent to Vatican II: Historical and Theological Investigations* (2006)

Vatican II: History of the Council


Vatican II: Commentaries on the documents

Rediscovering Vatican II:

**Vatican II: Reports**

Xavier Rynne, *Letters from Vatican City* (1963)  
----, *The Second Session* (1964)  
----, *The Third Session* (1965)  
----, *The Fourth Session* (1966)  
Yves Congar, *Report from Rome II: The second Session of the Vatican Council* (1964)  
Michael Greene, *The Layman and the Council* (1964)  

**Studies:**


**The postconciliar period**

Karl Rahner, *The Church after the Council* (1966)  
Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Real Achievement of Vatican II* (1967)  
Paul Crowley, ed. *From Vatican II to Pope Francis: Charting a Catholic Future* (2014)