

DRAFT v.2
Subject to change. Full
syllabus available in Canvas
Wednesday, October 15th.

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Loyola University New Orleans

Church and Sacraments

RELM-C330-YZ1
Fall 2025

Important: Please check your Canvas course and/or your Loyola email account for an email from the instructor alerting you the course is open, then reply to that email confirming you are ready to begin the course. If you experience difficulties in finding your email address or accessing the course, please contact Loyola's Information Technology Help Desk ASAP: (504) 865-2255.

Course Description

This course examines the contemporary understanding of Church and sacraments and explores their implications for ministry and the life of faith today.

Key Learning Outcomes

As a result of taking this course, students will be able to:

- understand key elements of the study of the Church (that is, ecclesiology) in tradition, in light of Vatican II, and in contemporary developments.
- articulate the role of the Holy Spirit with regard to Church and sacraments.
- grow in understanding of worship and sacraments and their implications for ministry.
- continue to develop and nurture a prayer life, particularly in terms of *lectio divina*.

Required Texts

Please purchase the texts for this class as soon as possible from the bookstore of your choice or from the Loyola [Bookstore](#).

Cooke, Bernard. *Sacraments and Sacramentality*. Twenty-Third Publications, 2004. ISBN 0-8962-2588-7. (This text is available in Canvas; you do not need to purchase it)

Gaillardetz, Richard R., and Catherine E. Clifford. *Keys to the Council: Unlocking the Teachings of Vatican II*. Liturgical Press, 2012. ISBN-13 978-0-8146-3368-7. (This text is available in Canvas; you do not need to purchase it)

Additional readings available in Canvas and through the Monroe Library. The designation (L)

in the weekly readings means that you will need to access the reading in the ATLA Serials Database or another Monroe Library database.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Sequence of Topics/Calendar of Assignments

Week	Topic	Assignments
Week 1: 10/20 – 10/26	Vatican II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Introduction • Initial Understanding Assignment • Assigned readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2
Week 2: 10/27 – 11/2	The Church: Who?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned Readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2
Week 3: 11/3 – 11/9	Roles in and Mission of the Church (Nov. 7 Federal Election Day Holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Prayer Journal 1 due • Optional synchronous class meeting
Week 4: 11/10 – 11/16	Catholicity and Relations of the Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2
Week 5: 11/17 – 11/23	Sacraments and Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Videos • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Ritual Project due
Week 6: 11/24 – 11/30	Sacrament, Eucharist, and Initiation (Nov. 26-28 Thanksgiving Holiday)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Discussion Question • Space Project Due • Optional synchronous class meeting
Week 7: 12/1 – 12/7	Eucharist and Initiation (continued)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assigned readings • Video • Discussion Questions 1 and 2 • Liturgy Project due • Prayer Journal 2 due
Week 8: 12/8 – 12/14	Final Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete and submit final exam by 11:59 pm CT on Thursday, 12/11

Nov. 19: Deadline for posting Midterm Grades 11:59 pm CT

Dec. 15: Deadline for posting Final Grades 11:59 pm CT

Assignments for Week 1, October 23-29: *Vatican II*

- Do First: Please complete Initial Understanding Assignment (see below)
- Introduce yourself
- Read:
 - Rausch, “The Marks of the Church” (PDF file in Canvas)

- Rausch, [“From Churches to Church”](#) *America Magazine*
- O’Malley, [“The Style of Vatican II,”](#) *America Magazine*
- John W. O’Malley, [“Vatican II: The Council of Rapprochement,”](#) *Etudes*, Sept. 2012, Georgetown U
- Polan, “Lectio Divina: Reading and Praying the Word of God” (PDF file in Canvas)
- Read and view material that introduces the library
- **Optional:** For an ecumenical perspective on the Church particularly authority in the Church, see [The Church: Towards a Common Vision](#) by the World Council of Churches, which describes itself as “[a] worldwide fellowship of churches seeking unity, a common witness and Christian service.” It is the premier international organization committed to ecumenism. See especially pages 27-32 on an ecumenical view of authority in the Church. For a review of a range of ecumenical issues, see Mark Hill, [“The Regulation of Christian Churches: Ecclesiology, Law and Polity.”](#)
- Complete the *Lumen Gentium* assignment and the Discussion Questions

Initial Understandings Exercise

The purpose of the Initial Understanding assignment is for you to establish your baseline understanding of certain themes that you will return to on your final exam. So, before you do any other assignments for this course, please spend at least twenty minutes writing on the questions included in the Week 1 module in Canvas. You will not submit what you’ve written, but you will need to consult it on your final exam, so find some place to keep it safe.

Assessment

Each student’s final grade will include the following parts:

		Percentage of Grade
1	Substantive participation in weekly discussion via online postings	45%
2	Prayer Journals (2)	10%
3	Observation Projects (3)	15%
4	Final Exam	30%

1) Discussions (45%)

As in all RELM courses, the strength of our program is the intentional learning community and its ongoing invitation to disciplined conversation. Through the online courses you will be part of an intentional learning community that will carry on extended and disciplined conversation by way of the internet.

A discussion is an “asynchronous” or time-independent application. This means that generally

you will have no set times or schedules when you must be in class on any particular day. It is up to you to determine when to log in and post during the course of a week, within the parameters of the given weekly deadlines. We do expect that you will log in to this class several times a week to read the comments of your instructor and fellow students and to post your required comments. Except for the last week, each weekly session runs from 12:01 a.m. US Central Monday until 11:59 p.m. Central the following Sunday. The final session ends at 11:59 p.m. Central on October 10. Late posts are subject to reduced grade or to a grade of 0. Please consult with your professor about any foreseen or unforeseen absence from the course.

Each week I will select several Discussion Leaders to help initiate the flow of our conversation. The task of the Discussion Leader is simply to post first. S/he will essentially begin the conversation around the given question(s) for the week by posting her response to the session question; everyone else assigned to that group will respond on that same thread. In at least one of your responses, you will also offer your own reflections on the question (perhaps in addition to your response to the discussion question). Each week you will be able to earn four points for each question, for your weekly participation; this includes your response to the assigned question(s), as well as the thoughtful replies you are asked to make to your colleagues' posts.

All students are expected to contribute at least three substantive responses for each question. Lead students post their initial reflections by Wednesday; everyone who is not a lead student should post at least once by Friday.

Tentatively, there will be two **optional video conferences** during the course. To participate, students will need access to a computer with a web camera and microphone, and earphones or earbuds. More information will be included in the Canvas course. There will also be two **required small group meetings** during the course. More information will be included in the Canvas course.

Posting

Contributions to Discussions should be the fruit of, and therefore demonstrate, a critical engagement with the course assignments. To achieve this, you are asked to note comments, questions, observations, reflections, insights that surface as the natural result of thoughtful reading. Your weekly postings should be substantive and respect the word limit posted for each week's questions. A substantive response will include both your own reflections on the question and some interaction with course materials you're your fellow students' reflections.

Please include references to the course materials to indicate this interaction; include a parenthetical reference with at least the name of the material or the author and, if possible a page number (e.g., Cooke 15; Clifford video). Please also alert your readers when you refer to other outside sources, such as other books or websites.

Your replies to your colleagues should also be substantive: "I agree" or "I like what you posted" or something similar is not a substantive comment. Please articulate what about their posting is compelling to you, the connections you make with the assigned material for the week, and why you consider their comment relevant, challenging, important, etc. Ideally, each discussion thread

will become a conversation. (If you have a comment that you would like to make to a colleague that is not related to the discussion, you may either post it in the “Student Lounge” Discussion (accessible from the course homepage) or send an email to the student via the People section of the course.)

Asking Questions

One of the most effective tools of a good online discussion is the question. Communication in the online medium can be easily misinterpreted. It can be challenging to effectively convey tone and nuance in an online discussion. This can sometimes lead to misunderstanding, conflict and frustration in the learning group. But this does not have to be the case! When in doubt about the meaning of a posting, please ask questions before making assumptions or jumping to conclusions. Even if the meaning seems straightforward, it is good practice to ask follow-up questions and/or questions for clarification. Questions will also help to discussions deepening our conversations and reflections.

In sum, what should your Discussion posts look like?

- Your posts should always be substantive, meaning focused, succinct, and worth reading. Keep in mind that we all have to read these posts!
- Your posts should bring your own experience into conversation with our course materials and with what the other members of the learning community are saying, and they should always directly address the question at hand.
- Your responses should also be critical, meaning that the conversation should also generate questions, requests for clarification, and other methods of deepening the discussion. As you can see, remarks like “I loved your post” or “I agree wholeheartedly” are NOT substantive posts!
- In addition to being substantive, our online conversations should also be authentic—that is, anything that you say online should be something that you would say if we were all sitting around a table in a physical room.

2) Prayer Journals (10%)

The prayer practice woven through this course is the ancient practice of *lectio divina*. Twice during the semester you will submit a journal entry of at least 300 words. Complete details will be included in the final syllabus posted in the Canvas course during the week of 8/14.

3) Observation Projects (15%)

You will complete three observation journals based on your explorations of a secular ritual (Ritual Project), a formal public space or religious space not your own (Space Project), and a religious liturgy not your own (Liturgy Project). Complete details will be included in the final syllabus posted in the Canvas course during the week of 8/14.

4) Final Exam (30%)

The purpose of the final exam is for you to synthesize what you've learned this class. You will receive precise instructions for the exam in the Canvas course.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D	65-69	F	64 or below
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76				
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72				

Course Policies

Incomplete Grade Policy

Students are subject to the university policy regarding incomplete grades with the following additions to university policy. Grades of Incomplete are given at the instructor's discretion. Students must complete LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources » Policies, Forms, & Services section of their Canvas course. Students should first inquire of their instructor whether or not they are eligible for an incomplete; this must occur with sufficient time to complete the process explained here. To be eligible, students may not have received an Incomplete in the previous semester, must have completed at least 75% of the course work to date, and must have at least a C or above in the course. After the instructor makes an initial assessment of eligibility, including checking with the LIM Office to ensure there was no Incomplete in the previous semester and finds the student eligible, by the due date of the course's final assignment, a student must complete and obtain all signatures for LIM's Incomplete Grade Request Form found in the Resources section of their Canvas course and submit it to their instructor, who will forward a copy to the LIM Director. LIM graduate students may not receive Incompletes in LIM courses in consecutive semesters.

Attendance & Participation

Students are subject to the university policy regarding attendance found online in the *Bulletin*. Students in online courses communicate their presence by active participation in weekly discussions. Each course's instructor sets requirements for how many times students must post on the Discussion Board in Canvas. Failing to post during the first week of class may result in removal from the course. If you foresee that you will be unable to post in a given week, please contact the instructor ahead of time. Extensions for posting are given at the instructor's discretion and for a valid reason may be granted if arranged ahead of time. In extraordinary circumstances, students may arrange with their instructor to post up to two weeks after a deadline, though this may entail a grade reduction. Posts and other assignments submitted more than two weeks late may be subject to a grade of zero. If students do not post in a given week, they are considered absent. Absence for more than one week without contacting the instructor

may result in removal from and failure of the course.

Tentatively, there will be two **optional video conferences** during the course. To participate, students will need access to a computer with a web camera and microphone, and earphones or earbuds. More information will be included in the Canvas course.

University Policies

Please read Part 2 of the syllabus (located on LORA and in Canvas) for university policies on plagiarism, accessible education, and more.