

**St. Mary's Ecumenical Institute
Summer 2016**

ST/ES/PT 620 Church as Missional Minority

Instructor Dr. Laytham (plus the 7 lecturers at the Pro Ecclesia conference)

Intensive plus evenings

Class meets 6-9 pm on Thursday June 2, and Mondays June 13, 20 and 27 at St. Mary's.
Conference: Monday evening - Wednesday afternoon, June 6-8, at Loyola University
(The EI pays the conference registration fee for all students taking this course for credit.)

Prerequisites TH601 or permission of instructor

Course Description

This course builds on the 2016 *Pro Ecclesia Conference*, "The Emerging Christian Minority" (see below). Students enrolled in the class will attend the entire conference, which seeks to understand the emerging minority status of Christian churches as they "find that they are no longer the essential center of American society's spiritual and moral life. Christian faith and life is now seen, when it is seen at all, as one option among many...." The conference and the course will not stop with diagnosis, however, but move to prescription: how can the church live and act faithfully in this emerging cultural context? The course will focus ecumenically on ecclesiology, the doctrine of the church, asking "what account of the church is needed to faithfully embody God's mission here and now?"

Course Requirements

- Students should expect to read at most 950 of required reading.
- Students should expect to attend the entire Pro Ecclesia conference.
- Students should expect to write about 16-17 double-spaced pages, as follows:
 1. A brief statement of the most important theological claims about the church in the present place and time (1-2 pages), first draft by 6/27, revised and re-submitted by July 22.
 2. A final project paper pursuing a key ecclesiological question or issue raised by the course. This 15 page paper is a formal reflection paper incorporating course readings and conference papers (not a research paper). Due July 22.
- Students should expect to develop a current cultural assessment of the context of the church in the United States. Rather than a formal paper, this can be a 'working document' that is physical, virtual, or both, that includes notes, photocopies, handouts, internet resources, blog posts, news clippings, etc. Whatever you think are crucial clues to our cultural reality can be included. Students prepare a cover page listing, as bullet points, the most important cultural trends or realities found (a list of 4-8 items). Due July 22.

Required Texts

Barna Group, George Barna and David Kinnaman, eds., *Churchless* (Tyndale Momentum, 2014) 978-1414387093

William T. Cavanaugh, *Migrations of the Holy: God, State, and the Political Meaning of the Church* (Eerdmans, 2011) 978-0802866097

Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Orbis, 2008), 978-1570757693

Michael Jinkins, *The Church Faces Death: Ecclesiology in a Post-Modern Context* (Oxford, 1999) please buy a used copy (in the \$14-20 range)

James K.A. Smith, *How (Not) to Be Secular: Reading Charles Taylor* (Eerdmans, 2014) 978-0802867612

Narrative Course Outline

In this course, we will pursue together the question “what account of the church is needed to faithfully embody God’s mission here and now?” Central to our pursuit is the opportunity to participate in high level ecumenical conversation about the nature and mission of the church in light of emerging cultural and demographic trends. The Pro Ecclesia conference not only offers significant theologians as presenters, but as conference attendees, so in addition to the seven speakers, you will have dozens of additional ‘teachers.’ In that sense, the conference will be some of our most important class sessions, and in another sense, it will be one of our most important textbooks.

June 2. Members of the class will gather once before the conference to develop questions and categories that help us to fully engage at the conference. We will prepare for the first class session by reviewing our understanding of ecclesiology from prior courses and reading some new ecclesiology, and by a first encounter with myriad accounts and assessments of demographic and cultural change. To focus the latter, we will read Diana Butler Bass’s first person account of growing up on a Harford Road neighborhood in Baltimore, and of how things have changed in the ensuing 50 years (from *Christianity for the Rest of Us: How the Neighborhood Church is Transforming Faith*).

June 6-8. Then we attend the 2016 Pro Ecclesia Conference, “The Emerging Christian Minority.” The conference description reads:

Christian churches find that they are no longer the essential center of American society’s spiritual and moral life. Christian faith and life is now seen, when it is seen at all, as one option among many. Symptomatic of the marginalization of the churches in North America are those cultural issues in which the catholic and evangelical voice is now a minority. Symptomatic also is the rise of the “nones”—the sociological term of art for those whose religion is “none of the above.” We are experiencing in general the emergence of a deeply fissured world that seems strangely, perhaps suddenly, other to our world of not that long ago. It is difficult to see clearly how to understand our present situation, to diagnose how we got here, and perhaps most of all to see how best to proclaim the Gospel and to claim the freedom to do so—in short, how best now to act faithfully. The 2016 annual conference of the Center for Catholic and Evangelical Theology will offer significant plenary addresses on these themes, and opportunity for question and discussion, in the context of common Christian prayer.

The scheduled speakers come from across the ecumenical spectrum—Catholic, Episcopalian, Orthodox, Lutheran, with a distinguished Jewish scholar leading off:

MONDAY EVENING (JUNE 6) David Novak, *Advice on Being a Millennially-Despised Minority*

TUESDAY MORNING (JUNE 7)

Paige Hochschild, *Realist Engagement in the Midst of a Crumbling Empire: Augustinian Thoughts*

William T. Cavanaugh, *Is It Good to Be Persecuted?*

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Kathryn Schifferdecker, *A Tree Planted by Streams of Water: Scriptural Lessons on Hope*

Anton Vrame, *American Orthodoxy: A Minority that Came of Age*

WEDNESDAY MORNING (JUNE 8)

Robert Hendrickson, *Keeping up with Tradition: Preaching & Pastoring as an Emerging Minority*

Joseph D. Small, *The Gospel in “A Secular Age”*

We will plan to eat lunch together, as a class, for a first discussion of the conference. (You can expect to be headed for home by 2 pm.)

June 13, 20, 27. Our final three evening class sessions will continue the conversation from the conference. Students are invited to identify one conference talk (or two if necessary) for further exploration, and these topics will be distributed equally. In addition, we will focus each week on one

major text (Cavanaugh, then Jenkins, then Smith) while spreading Gaillardetz over all three weeks. (While it would be ideal if every student were able to read all assigned texts in advance of each class and conference session, that may not be a realistic expectation. For the course to accomplish its learning objectives, it will suffice for students to read a reasonable portion of all assigned texts in advance, and to complete that reading by the course completion date of July 22.)

July 22. Students are expected to develop a working analysis of the current context of the church in the United States. Rather than a formal paper, this can be a ‘working document’ or portfolio that includes notes, photocopies and handouts, etc., with a cover page listing the most important cultural trends or realities (a list of 4-6 items). Students are also expected to develop a list of the most important theological claims we must make about the church here and now; this would be 4-6 doctrinal theses or paragraphs (so 1-2 pages). Submit a first draft before the final class session, so we can discuss together, with the final version due July 22. Final projects should pursue at greater depth either 1) a crucial question raised by the class but not answered, or 2) the intersection of one of the most important cultural realities with one of the crucial ecclesiological claims. This is a formal reflection paper [not a research paper] of about 15 pages, due July 22.