“Through divine revelation [the Word of God], God chose to show forth and communicate Himself and the eternal decisions of His will regarding the salvation of men. … Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the word of God, committed to the Church. … But the task of authentically interpreting the word of God, whether written or handed on, has been entrusted exclusively to the living teaching office of the Church.” – *Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation / Dei Verbum* [Word of God], November 18, 1965, I:6, II:10.

“Roman Catholicism undoubtedly has some very distinctive beliefs and practices, but it is perhaps its centralized authority structure which most distinguishes it from other Christian Churches – indeed from any other world faith.” -- Michael Walsh in *Roman Catholicism: The Basics*, p. 9.

**Course Description:** This course uses a series of historical case studies ranging from the New Testament to the Second Vatican Council to explore the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church’s efforts to transmit what it claims God has revealed to humans and the emergence and development of its centralized authority structure.

**Perspective of the Course:** For the purposes of this course, we will define revelation as knowledge that an individual or group claim was disclosed or communicated to them or others from a non-ordinary (i.e., otherworldly) source. We will define a revelation-based tradition as one in which an individual or group claims that their knowledge of revelation was handed down to them from the past. Those who position themselves within a revelation-based tradition typically seek to keep it alive by making claims about what was revealed in the past and how it can be known in the present. Historians (and scholars of religion who employ historical methods) do not make claims about revelation in their role as historians. Instead we seek to understand the claims that people have made and are making about revelation and how it can be known.

These two perspectives – that of the believer and the historian – often result in different histories. When participants in the tradition write histories of Christianity or Catholicism, their histories often reflect their faith that something was revealed and their beliefs about how it can or should be known in the present. Many such histories assume that a core of true teaching was revealed at the outset and then defended against false teachings (heresies) that emerged over time. From this perspective, it is assumed that orthodoxy existed from the beginning independent of heresy (heterodoxy), and that, as long as orthodoxy is kept free of heretical ideas, it can be passed on more or less unchanged.
From the perspective of the historian, things look rather different. First, we find that when people claim that something has been revealed, others do not necessarily agree, and if they do, they do not necessarily agree about what it means. Claims about revelation, in other words, provoke discussion and debate. From this perspective, orthodoxy and heterodoxy are not fixed and stable categories; rather, they are labels that are applied to divergent views in the wake of disagreements over what has been or is being revealed. They tell us what counts as authentic revelation from the perspective of an in-group (the orthodox) and create the distinction between insiders (orthodox) and outsiders (heterodox). Second, we find that people continue to have experiences that they consider revelatory. They share their experiences with others and debate the truth or value of their insights. Both elites and ordinary people may generate new claims regarding revelation and existing religious traditions have to deal with this in one way or another.

This course is structured around a series of disputes regarding claims about revelation in the history of Christianity. In each case, we will engage secondary literature about the dispute and primary documents that emerged in the context or wake of the dispute. We will position ourselves as observers of these debates and ask a series of questions designed to structure our investigation of each of the cases:

1. What was the ‘interpretive event’ or ‘dispute’ in question? What specifically was being disputed?
2. Who were the parties to the dispute?
3. What was the nature of the dispute and where did it take place?
4. What relationship did the parties in the dispute have to one another?
   a. What were the critical relationships (military, political, intellectual, economic, ethnic, gender, etc.) of each of the parties to each of the other parties in the context of their engagement?
   b. What significant cultural and religious backgrounds did each of the parties in question bring to the engagement?
5. What were the critical points in the dispute / debate?
   a. What views did each of the parties advance relative to the points in dispute?
   b. What arguments did each of the parties make to advance their position?
6. What claims or assumptions with respect to authority informed the dispute?
   a. What sources of authority did they draw on to defend their position?
   b. How did they respond to the competing claims of authority advanced by others in the dispute?
7. What was at stake in the dispute for each of the parties? What were the outcomes for each?
8. Comparison and assessment: How does this interaction and engagement relate to the previous interactions we have examined? What similarities and differences emerge?

Course Goals: The primary goal of the course is to analyze claims regarding revelation that arose within the tradition (broadly conceived), the disputes that resulted, the way the disputes were resolved, and the implications of the resolution for the tradition(s). The design of the course assumes that the best (or at least most interesting) way to get at this historically is through a close reading of texts and other cultural products generated by these debates from the vantage points of the various parties involved. The course
requirements are intended to develop your ability to analyze secondary materials in light of the course questions, to read primary texts closely in light of a range of secondary materials, and to present your ideas clearly and cogently.

Course Requirements:

1) **Preparation for class and participation in class discussions.** Regular attendance and participation in class is expected of everyone. To prepare for class, please write a two-page paper outlining answers to the questions (listed above) in light of the background reading for each case study from Week 3 through Week 9 (for a total of seven short papers). These papers will be due in class each Monday, beginning with Week 2. They papers will be evaluated on a 10 point scale; papers receiving at least 7/10 points will receive credit. You may rewrite one paper to improve your score. In cases where your final course grade falls on the border between grades, extra points on the short papers (above the seven needed for ‘credit’) will raise your final grade, while irregular attendance and lack of participation will lower it.

2) **Participation in a team of specialists.** While everyone will read and discuss all of the cases, you will be asked to probe one of the cases more deeply and serve as a member of a team of specialists the week we discuss the case you have explored in more depth. The team of specialists will be responsible for the supplementary readings for their case. The team presentation will include a well-edited 2-3-page paper on the questions, plus brief handouts that will help classmates understand important aspects of the case. These paper presentations will be assigned a letter grade. The teams can consult with the instructor as needed in person, via email, and/or the team chat room.

3) **A 7-10-page final paper analyzing primary materials.** You may use the primary materials assigned for the case in which you specialized as the basis for your final paper or you may propose a paper using different primary materials from that cultural context. The paper may address the questions listed above in more depth or it may focus on a particular issue of interest to you. I will ask you to turn in a proposal for your paper on or before February 2nd. You will be asked to briefly discuss what you are working on for your final paper during the last week of class.

**Grading**

- **Short papers – 35% (seven papers x 5 points)**
- **Class presentation and related paper(s) – 25%**
- **Final paper – 40%**

**Books**

- Revelation: Catholic and Muslim Perspectives – available in the UCEN Bookstore.
- READER, available from Grafikart, 6550 Pardall Road, Isla Vista (968-3575).
- Note: You do not need to purchase Elaine Pagel’s Gnostic Gospels.

If you are having difficulties with any aspect of the course, please feel free to drop by during office hours. In addition, Campus Learning Assistance Services offers a wide range of writing tutorial services and study skills programs (see flyers posted in Gauchospace for more information).
COURSE OUTLINE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK 1: PLURALISM AND DIALOGUE (21ST CENTURY)
Tu 01/05 (1.1) Introduction to the Course
Th 01/07 (1.2) Reading: Revelation: Catholic and Muslim Perspectives (2006).
Question: In response to growing religious pluralism and the tensions created by 9/11, the Islamic Society of North America and the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops sponsored a dialogue between Catholics and Muslims in the Midwest in which they asked, “What is ‘revelation’ for believers of both faiths?”
Focal event = inter-religious dialogue. We will use their dialogue to orient ourselves to contemporary understandings of revelation in these two traditions and to try out the series of questions we will address to each of our cases. We will then turn to the historical cases in order to investigate how the Catholic Church arrived at its current understanding.

WEEK 2: JESUS: SCRIPTURE & EXPERIENCE (1ST CENTURY), PART I.
Tu 01/12 (2.1) Readings: Larry Hurtado, “Devotion to Jesus and second-temple Jewish monotheistic piety” (pp. 31-55) and “Religious experience and religious innovation in the New Testament” (pp. 179-204) in idem., How on earth did Jesus become a god? (Eerdmans, 2005).
Question: In the wake of Jesus’ crucifixion, Jews asked, “who was Jesus and what did it mean that he was crucified?”

WEEK 3: PAUL: SCRIPTURE & EXPERIENCE (1ST CENTURY), PART II.
Question: In the wake of the conversion of the first non-Jews to Christianity, Jewish Christians asked, “How do we to know what it means to follow Christ?”

WEEK 4: IRENAEUS: BISHOPS & APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION (2ND CENTURY)
Question: In response to disagreements within his diocese, Bishop Irenaeus of Lyon asked, “How are we to know (knowledge = gnosis) and authentically transmit Christ’s teachings?”
**Focal event** = interpretation of the prologue to the Gospel of John (John 1: 1-18; Irenaeus I: 8-9 and III: 11).

**WEEK 5: CONSTANTINE: CREEDS, COUNCILS & IMPERIAL POWER (4TH CENT)**

**TU 02/02 (5.1) Readings:**
- J. Rebecca Lyman, “Arius and Arians,” in Harvey and Hunter, 237-57 (focus on pp. 237-46)
- Harold A. Drake, “Church and Empire,” in Harvey and Hunter, 446-64;

**TH 02/04 (5.2) Readings:**
- Trinitarian Controversy: The Texts -- readings #20-22 in Ehrman and Jacobs, *Christianity in Late Antiquity* [CLA].
- Nicene and Constantinopolitan Creeds – readings #33 & 34 in CLA.

**Question:** In response to disagreements among bishops regarding how Christ should be understood, the Emperor Constantine asked, “How are we to determine which understanding of Christ is correct when bishops disagree?”

**Focal event** = the Council of Nicaea.

**TH 02/04 - Proposals for final paper due.**

**WEEK 6: DOMINIC: POPES, CRUSADES, AND INQUISITORS (12TH CENTURY)**

**TU 02/09 (6.1) Readings:**

**TH 02/11 (6.2) Readings:**
- Canons of the Fourth Lateran Council, #1, 3, 21.

**Question:** In response to the intensification of religiosity among the laity, the pope (and others) asked, “How can we ensure that this intense religiosity is orthodox and not heretical?

**Focal event** = debates over what it meant to be a good (perfect, holy) Christian.

**WEEK 7: LUTHER: SCRIPTURE, CONSCIENCE, STATE (16TH CENTURY)**

**TU 02/16 (7.1) Reading:** Lee Palmer Wandel, *The Eucharist in the Reformation*, 1-29, 94-101, 208-13, 256-62.

**TH 02/18 (7.2) Readings:**
• Martin Luther, “The Appeal to the German Nobility” (1520) and “The Babylonian Captivity of the Church” (1520), excerpts.
• The Council of Trent: “On Scripture and Tradition” (1546), “On the Eucharist” (1551), and “On the Most Holy Sacrifice of the Mass” (1562), excerpts.

**Question:** In light of Martin Luther’s desire to reform the Church’s understanding of the sacraments based on his interpretation of scripture, church leaders asked, “How can we ensure that scripture is interpreted correctly?”


**WEEK 8: TYRRELL: POPES, COUNCILS, AND EXPERIENCE (19TH CENTURY)**

**Tu 03/23 (8.1) Readings:**

**Th 03/25 (8.2) Readings:**
• First Vatican Council (1870) – *Dei filius* (Chapter 2: On revelation)
• Leo XII (1878), *Aeterni Patris* (On the restoration of Christian philosophy)
• George Tyrrell, “Revelation and Theology,” in Tradition and the Critical Spirit: Catholic Modernist Writings, pp. 32-49.
• The Papal Condemnation (*Pascendi*, 1907, and *Lamentabili*, 1907), in Roman Catholic Modernism, 237-248.
• *The Oath Against Modernism*, 1910, from Modern History Sourcebook.

**Question:** In light of the challenges posed to the very idea of revelation by modern thinkers and the resulting “modernist crisis” within Catholicism, Catholic theologians asked, “From whence does revelation come and how is it to be known?”

**Focal event** = competing models of revelation.

**WEEK 9: RATZINGER: REVELATION, TRADITION, AND HISTORY (20TH CENT)**

**Tu 03/02 (9.1) Readings:**
• Tracey Rowland, Ratzinger’s Faith (Oxford, 2008), 48-65.
• Joseph Ratzinger (Pope Benedict XVI), Jesus of Nazareth (2007), xi-xxiv (forward) and “Address to the 14th General Congregation of Bishops,” October 14, 2008.

**Th 03/04 (9.2) Readings:**
• Second Vatican Council (1965), *Dei Verbum* (Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation)

**Question:** In light of the general acceptance of historical methods in modern scholarship, church leaders and scholars of religion asked, “What is revelation?” and “What is tradition?”

**Focal event** = interpreting revelatory claims from Catholic and Religious Studies perspectives.

**WEEK 10: STUDENT PRESENTATIONS**
SUPPLEMENTARY READINGS

GS = Article or excerpt posted on Gauchospace.
R = Book on reserve.

Week 2: Jesus: Scripture and Experience, Part I
- Karen L. King, “Which early Christianity?” in S. A. Harvey and D. Hunter, eds., The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies (Oxford, 2008), 66-84. King provides an overview of scholarship on the problem of diversity in early Christianity. This is a more advanced article that can provide a larger perspective on the readings assigned for Weeks 2 and 3. GS & R

Week 3: Paul: Scripture and Experience, Part II
- See also, King article (above). GS & R

Week 4: Irenaeus: Bishops and Apostolic Succession
- Antti Marjanen, “‘Gnosticism,’” in Harvey and Hunter, eds., pp. 203-220. Marjanen provides an excellent overview of currently scholarly discussions of so-called ‘gnosticism.’ GS & R
- Michael W. Holmes, “The biblical canon,” in Harvey and Hunter, eds., pp. 406-426. All good, see in particular definitions of scripture (as sacred text) and canon (as rule and as list of sacred texts) [20.1.1-2] and the formation of the New Testament canon [20.3]. GS & R
- Karen Jo Torjesen, “Clergy and laity, in Harvey and Hunter, pp. 389-405. Torjesen provides an overview of the development of the distinction between clergy and laity and with it the emergence of the office of the bishop. GS & R
See also:

Week 5: Constantine: Creeds, Councils, and Imperial Power
- Harold A. Drake, Constantine and the Bishops (Johns Hopkins, 2000). This provides a much more detailed version of the argument summarized in Drake’s article in the reader. See especially, chapters 6-7 (pp. 192-272). R
Week 6: Dominic: Popes, Crusades, and Inquisitors


- Dyan Elliott, *Proving Women: Female Spirituality and Inquisitorial Culture in the Later Middle Ages* (2004), 119-79. This is one of the places in the course where you can really tackle issues of gender. Elliott’s book is dense and scholarly, but chapter 4 (pp. 119-79) provides an excellent analysis of use of inquisitorial procedure to establish both sanctity (as in sainthood) and heresy and the difficulty distinguishing between them. Chapter 7 (pp. 264-97) discusses how this played out in relation to Joan of Arc. Material in chapter 7 is also available in Dyan Elliott, "Seeing Double: John Gerson, the Discernment of Spirits, and Joan of Arc," *American Historical Review* 107/1 (2002). Book = R; article = GS

Week 7: Luther: Scripture, Conscience, and State

- Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Reformation* (Penguin, 2003). This is an excellent new one-volume history of the reformation era. Chapters 3-4 (pp., 106-212) provide material on Luther and the Protestant reformation. Chapters 5-6 (pp., 213-305) provide an overview of the Catholic response, including the various sessions of the Council of Trent. R

Week 8: Tyrrell: Popes, Councils, and Experience


- Gerald McCool, “Dei Filius and Aeterni Patris,” in Nineteenth Century Scholasticism, pp. 216-240. This is a much more detailed and technical discussion of the theological sources of these two key documents. GS

- John D. Root, “English Catholic modernism and science: The case of George Tyrrell,” *Heythrop Journal* 18/3 (1977): 271-288. This is an excellent article that positions Tyrrell’s distinction between revelation and theology in relation to scientific thought. GS

See also:

- George Tyrrell, *Through Scylla and Charybdis*, or, *The old theology and the new* (London: Longmans Green, 1907). The Tyrrell selection in the reader was taken from this volume. The entire text is available on-line at [http://openlibrary.org/b/OL7204130M/Through_Scylla_and_Charybdis](http://openlibrary.org/b/OL7204130M/Through_Scylla_and_Charybdis)

Week 9: Ratzinger: Revelation, Tradition, and History