

# FAITH, UNBELIEF, AND CULTURE

Pontifical Beda College

Second Semester 2017-18  
Wednesdays, 10.50-12.25

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<http://www.romestudy.org/culture.html>

## COURSE OBJECTIVES

The course will introduce students to a critical reading of culture and an analysis of cultural movements from a Christian perspective. It will reflect on how faith and unbelief are inextricably cultural phenomena and discuss tools for discerning their true meaning. In specific, students will learn

- The Roman Catholic approach to culture, its meaning, and its value
- How the arts manifest a culture and also are mediators of Christian faith in different times and cultures
- Issues in the dialogue between faith and the arts today
- How “faith” and “unbelief” are often cultural phenomena and not related to true faith and real unbelief
- The Roman Catholic attitude toward atheism
- Some tools for integrating faith and culture and for using faith to embrace culture

## CLASSES

Wednesday, Feb 21      Culture in Roman Catholic perspective  
Wednesday, Feb 28      Faith and Culture in Dialogue: The arts through the ages  
Friday, Mar 9            Faith and Culture in Dialogue: Issues today  
Wednesday, Mar 14     Modern atheism, secularism, and modern belief  
Exam, Mar 21 (before and after lunch)

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Magisterial Documents
  - Second Vatican Council, *Gaudium et Spes*, 7 December 1965, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_const\\_19651207\\_gaudium-et-spes\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_const_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html).
  - John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 25 March 1995, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_enc\\_25031995\\_evangelium-vitae\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html).
  - Pontifical Council for Culture, *The Via Pulchritudinis: Privileged Pathway for Evangelization and Dialogue*, 28 March 2006, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/cultr/documents/rc\\_pc\\_cultr\\_doc\\_20060327\\_plenary-assembly\\_final-document\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_20060327_plenary-assembly_final-document_en.html).
  - Pontifical Council for Culture, *Where is Your God?: Responding to the Challenge of Unbelief and Religious Indifference Today*, 13 March 2004, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/cultr/documents/rc\\_pc\\_cultr\\_doc\\_20040313\\_where-is-your-god\\_en.html#0](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_20040313_where-is-your-god_en.html#0).

- Pontifical Council for Culture & Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Jesus Christ, the Bearer of the Water of Life: A Christian Reflection on the "New Age"*, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/interelg/documents/rc\\_pc\\_interelg\\_doc\\_20030203\\_new-age\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/interelg/documents/rc_pc_interelg_doc_20030203_new-age_en.html).
- Pontifical Council for Culture, *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*, 23 May 1999, [http://www.vatican.va/roman\\_curia/pontifical\\_councils/cultr/documents/rc\\_pc\\_cultr\\_doc\\_03061999\\_pastoral\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_03061999_pastoral_en.html).
- John Paul II, *Inde a Pontificatus*, 25 March 1993, [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/motu\\_proprio/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_motu-proprio\\_25031993\\_inde-a-pontificatus\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/motu_proprio/documents/hf_jp-ii_motu-proprio_25031993_inde-a-pontificatus_en.html).
- Pontifical Council for Culture, *Fede e Cultura: Antologia di testi dal Magistero Pontificio da Leone XIII a Giovanni Paolo II* (Vatican City: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2003).
- Books
  - Gerald A. Arbuckle, *Earthing the Gospel: An Inculturation Handbook for Pastoral Workers* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1990).
  - Liam Bergin (ed.), *Faith, Word, and Culture* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 2004).
  - Michael Budde, *The (Magic) Kingdom of God: Christianity and Global Culture Industries* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1997).
  - Anscar Chupungco, *Liturgical Inculturation: Sacramentals, Religiosity, and Catechesis* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992).
  - Christopher Dawson, *Religion and Culture* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948).
  - Michael Paul Gallagher, *Clashing Symbols: An Introduction to Faith and Culture* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2004).
  - Michael Paul Gallagher, *What are They Saying About Unbelief?* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1995).
  - John F. Kavanaugh, *Following Christ in a Consumer Society: The Spirituality of Cultural Resistance* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991).
  - Dermot Lane (ed.), *Religion and Culture in Dialogue: A Challenge for the Next Millennium* (Dublin: The Columba Press, 1993).
  - Clive Marsh, *Christianity in a Post-Atheist Age* (London: SCM Press, 2002).
  - H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (New York: Harper, 1956).
  - Hilary D. Regan and Alan J. Torrance (eds.), *Christ and Context: The Confrontation between Gospel and Culture* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993).
  - Aylward Shorter, *Toward a Theology of Inculturation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988).
- Journals
  - Pontifical Council for Culture, *Culture e Fede/Cultures and Faith/Cultures et Foi/Culturas y Fe*
  - *Journal of Religion and Popular Culture*

## EXAM

The course includes an oral exam, which will assess the student's understanding of the issues presented. During this exam, the student will be asked to:

- Discuss the various different ways in which culture can be understood.
- Give an account of the Roman Catholic understanding of the relationship between faith and culture.
- Discuss some aspects of the history of Christian engagement with culture, particularly in terms of art, architecture, and music.

- Discuss various aspects of today's culture and evaluate how the different aspects can support the faith or should be corrected by the faith.
- Present an account of contemporary unbelief and the meaning of atheism and secularism in today's world.
- Give some informed recommendations on how the Church might respond to a growing secular and unbelieving society.

The student should demonstrate a familiarity with the magisterial documents on the issue, especially *Gaudium et Spes*, *Evangelium Vitae*, and the Pontifical Council for Culture's *The Via Pulchritudinis*, *Where is Your God?*, *Jesus Christ the Bearer of the Water of Life*, and *Towards a Pastoral Approach to Culture*. An excellent exam will also include some reflections on the secondary literature.