

## **TESP 170 – THE CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY**

Winter Quarter 2009 – James Nickoloff ([jnickolo@holycross.edu](mailto:jnickolo@holycross.edu))

Office: Kenna 323E; Office Hours: T Th 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.

At the Second Vatican Council the bishops of the Catholic Church asserted that “the Church carries the responsibility of reading the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the gospel if it is to carry out its task” (GS 4). In the past half-century one of those “signs” has been the emergence of self-affirming homosexual persons in great numbers around the world. This massive “coming out” into the light of day has, in turn, produced a wide range of reactions in both churches and civil societies. Catholic officials have responded by reasserting the Church’s traditional teaching about homosexuality and by developing it further. Some bishops and many theologians and lay people have openly questioned this teaching. A new theological reflection on homosexuality—which means a new understanding of the relationship between God and homosexual persons--has also begun to emerge in some quarters. At the same time certain civil societies have recognized the legal rights of homosexual persons, including the right to marry. In the face of all this, a sharp debate has arisen in churches and civil societies around the world.

This course sets three objectives for the student: (1) to gain a clear understanding of the Catholic Church’s official teaching on homosexuality; (2) to grasp the major criticisms made of the teaching; and (3) to examine one’s own theological (in the strict sense) position on homosexuality in order to be able to participate intelligently in the ongoing discussion of homosexuality among Christians.

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

1. Mastery of the material covered in assigned readings and lectures.
2. Class attendance and informed participation are non-negotiable. Absence is permitted only for reasons of emergency. Late written assignments will be penalized one grade.
3. Weekly position papers will serve as the basis of class discussion.
4. A final term paper (10-15 pages) will provide an opportunity for further exploration of a particular aspect of the theology of homosexuality.
5. Diligence, humility, and humor are essential for this course just as they are for Christian living.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS (In order of assignment)**

1. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, “Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics” (1975); “Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Pastoral Care of Homosexual Persons” (1986); “Some Considerations Concerning the Response to Legislative Proposals on the Non-Discrimination of Homosexual Persons” (1992); “Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons” (2003).

2. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994), nos. 2357-2359, 2396.
3. The Pontifical Council for the Family, “The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality: Guidelines for Education within the Family” (1995).
4. United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “‘Always Our Children’: A Pastoral Message to Parents of Homosexual Children and Suggestions for Pastoral Ministers” (1997); “Between Man and Woman: Questions and Answers about Marriage and Same-sex Unions” (2003).
5. “Christian Anthropology and Homosexuality” (14-part series in *L’Osservatore Romano*, March 12 – June 18, 1997).
6. Jeffrey Siker, ed., *Homosexuality in the Church: Both Sides of the Debate* (Westminster John Knox, 1994).
7. Gareth Moore, O.P., *A Question of Truth: Christianity and Homosexuality* (Continuum, 2003).
8. Richard Cleaver, *Know My Name: A Gay Liberation Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 1995).

## **SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

<u>Class</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>
1/6 1/8	Theology and Homosexuality Official Church Teaching	CDF, PCF, USCCB
1/13 1/15	Logic of the Church’s Teaching	CDF; OR 1-8 OR 9-14
1/20 1/22	The Intra-Ecclesial Debate	Siker, i-35, 49-90 Siker, 93-133
1/27 1/29		Siker, 137-177 Siker, 179-208
2/3 2/5	A Theological Counter-Argument	Moore, i-37 Moore, 38-55
2/10 2/12		Moore, 56-117 Moore, 118-150
2/17		Moore, 151-176

2/19		Moore, 177-215
2/24		Moore, 216-246
2/26		Moore, 247-282
3/3	A Theological Reconstruction	Cleaver, i-61
3/5		Cleaver, 62-83
3/10		Cleaver, 84-148
3/12	Tentative Conclusions	

**COURSE EVALUATION:** Position Papers (50%); term paper (30%); class participation (20%).