



GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PASTORAL MINISTRIES

PMIN 231

Canon Law for Pastoral Ministers

Term: Spring 2026

Credits: 4

Course Day & Times: Monday, 6 pm – 9 pm

Location: In-Person (TBA) and Online

Instructor Information

Name: Karla Felix-Rivera, MDiv, JCL

Contact Phone & Email: 415-767-9072

Office Hours: By appointment



Artist John Nava

Course Description

Often, canon law is viewed as a hindrance to the exercise of pastoral ministry in the Church. Surprisingly, the opposite is true! Canon law is rich in theological content and provides practical direction to pastoral situations encountered by those called to ministry.

The course is designed to introduce ecclesiastical law as a pastoral tool for ministry (and will help students avoid mistakes when they support their parishes and dioceses).

The course examines the relationship between law and ministry and introduces students to the nature, history, and function of Church law through a study of the 1983 Code of Canon Law, local norms, and recent developments.

To better prepare students for ministry, the course explores the Church's hierarchical structure, the rights and obligations of the Christian faithful (the baptized, laity, clergy, and consecrated members), and the sanctifying and teaching offices of the Church.

This course will be offered in-person and online; however, three sessions are online only.

Mission and Goals of the Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries

The Graduate Program in Pastoral Ministries, rooted in the Jesuit tradition, provides theological and pastoral formation for a variety of ministries. Students are inspired to serve effectively in their diverse ministry settings as they deepen their call of service to the Church and the wider world.

Engaging the church's mission of lifelong ministerial formation, the program seeks to instill commitments to justice and to human flourishing in friendship with God and companionship with one another in service of all creation. The program cultivates this charism through a critical and sympathetic engagement with the Catholic theological tradition in dialogue with a constantly changing world.

Course Objectives

This course will develop students' knowledge of or skills related to:	
1	The application of canon law to pastoral situations encountered by pastoral ministers today, with consideration of cultural customs and faith traditions.
3	The historical development and sources of canon law, especially after the Second Vatican Council.
4	The Church's complex governance and organization, particularly the diocesan and parish structures in which pastoral ministers unfold their calling.
5	The Church as a <i>communio</i> where all the baptized faithful have unique rights and obligations.
6	The canonical principles guiding the administration and pastoral care in each of the seven sacraments.
7	The principles guiding sharing the sacraments with non-Roman-Catholic ecclesial churches.
8	The norms guiding marriage preparation, canonical consent and form, impediments for marriage, and the Church's understanding of the annulment process.
9	The canonical principles guiding the teaching office of the Church, especially preaching and catechetical instruction.

Required Resources (Textbooks and Course Readings)

1. *The Pastoral Companion: A Canon Law Handbook for Catholic Ministry*, 5th edition (*Gratianus Collection Series*). By John M. Huels. Wilson & LaFleur (2016). ISBN-978-2-89689-354-6.
2. *An Introduction to Canon Law*, third edition. By James A. Coriden. Paulist Press (2019). ISBN 978-0-8091-5422-7.
3. *The 1983 Code of Canon Law*: Can be used online or purchased.

Online Edition: www.vatican.va/archive/cod-iuris-canonici/cic_index_en.html

Printed Edition: *Code of Canon Law, Latin-English Edition, New English Translation*, 4th Printing. By *The Canon Law Society of America* (2023). ISBN 978-1-932208-65-8.

Note: Older printings do not include updated law but will work for this course.

Supplemental reading materials for this course will be found in Camino. To access course materials and participate in on-line activities, please be sure to review Camino. Reminders, tools, readings and assignment descriptions will be made available through this on-line course management system. Students must use their SCU username and password to access Camino.

The instructor retains the right to make changes, additions, or deletions to the syllabus, course outline, and schedule throughout the course. Any changes will be communicated through in-class announcements, Camino notifications and/or email.

Reading and Graded Assignments

Readings assignments must be completed prior to class. Readings will be drawn from the universal law of the Church (Code of Canon Law), local norms (US Bishops' Conference / diocesan norms), *An Introduction to Canon Law* (Coriden), and *The Pastoral Companion* (Huels).

Students will complete four shorter assignments which are focused on pastoral scenarios. The format of these assignments will vary and may be 1–2-page papers, short responses, or multiple-choice.

The final assignment will be an in-depth research paper (10-12 pages) based on a topic of pastoral significance chosen by the student.

Assignment	Due Date	Points
Class Participation	----	15
Short Assignment #1: Who is Who in the Church?	April 13	12.5
Short Assignment #2: Whose Right and Obligation is it?	April 20	12.5
Short Assignment #3: Was the Sacrament Valid or Maybe?	May 4	12.5
Short Assignment #4: Are They Married or It Depends?	May 18	12.5
Final Research Paper Cleared with Professor	May 29	--
Final Research Paper	June 8	35

Note: Descriptions and rubrics for course assignments can be found on Camino.

Grading Criteria

Letter grades are assigned based on overall percentage, as follows:

A	94-100%	4.0	C+	77-79%	2.3
A-	90-93%	3.7	C	74-76%	2.0
B+	87-89%	3.3	C-	70-73%	1.7
B	84-86%	3.0	D+	67-69%	1.3
B-	80-83%	2.7	D	63-66%	1.0

Course Outline

Date	Topic	Readings (Prior to Class)
Monday March 30, 2026	Introduction to the Development and Nature of Ecclesiastical Law	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 1 (Latin Rite only), 11 (subjects), 96 (personality) 2. John Paul II, Apostolic Constitution <i>Sacrae disciplinae leges</i>, 25 January 1983.
Monday April 6, 2026	The Church's Hierarchical Structure The Eastern Churches	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pages 1 – 40: “Introductory Issues,” in <i>An Introduction to Canon Law</i> 2. Pages 56 – 83: “Hierarchical Structures,” in <i>An Introduction to Canon Law</i>
Monday April 13, 2026	The Rights and Obligations of the Christian Faithful	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 204 – 223 (The Christian Faithful) 2. Pages 43 – 55: “The Christian Faithful,” in <i>An Introduction to Canon Law</i> 3. Pages 1 – 9: “The Faithful,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i>
Monday April 20, 2026 Everyone: Online Class	The Rights and Obligations of the Laity, Clerics, and Consecrated Persons	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 224 – 231 (The Lay Christian Faithful) 2. Canons: 273 – 293 (Clerics) 4. Canons: 573 – 606 (Consecrated Life)
Monday April 27, 2026	Intro to Sacramental Law Baptism Ecumenism and the Sacraments	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 834 – 839 (Liturgy) 2. Canons: 840 – 848 (Intro to Sacraments) 3. Canons: 849 – 878 (Baptism) 4. Chapter II, “Baptism,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i> 3. Chapter XV, “Ecumenism and Liturgy” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i>

Date	Topic	Readings (Prior to Class)
Monday May 4, 2026 Everyone: Online Class	Confirmation The Most Holy Eucharist (Penance & Anointing of the Sick)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 879 – 896 (Confirmation) 2. Chapter III, “Confirmation,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i> 3. Canons: 897 – 958 (The Most Holy Eucharist) 4. Chapter IV, “Eucharist,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i> <p>Optional:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 959 – 997 (Penance) 2. Chapter V, “Penance” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i> 3. <i>USCCB Complimentary Norms</i>: general absolution (c. 961§1.2), the confessional (c. 964 §2). 4. Canons 998 – 1007 (Anointing of the Sick) 5. Chapter VI: “Anointing of the Sick,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i>.
Monday May 11, 2026	Theology of Marriage Matrimonial Consent Canonical Form Marriage Preparation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 1055 – 1155 (Marriage) 2. <i>USCCB Complimentary Norms</i>: engagement (c. 1067), the investigation of freedom to marry (c. 1067), and lay witnesses for marriage (c. 1112) 3. Chapters VIII - XI, “Preparation for Marriage,” “Impediments to Marriage,” “Matrimonial Consent,” “Celebration of Marriage,” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i>
May 18, 2026 Everyone: Online Class	Impediments to Marriage The Marriage Annulment Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 1151 – 1155 (Separation) 2. Canons: 1156 – 1165 (Convalidation) 4. Chapter XII, “Dissolution, Declaration of Invalidity and Convalidation of Marriage” in <i>The Pastoral Companion</i>
May 25, 2026	The Teaching Function of the Church	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canons: 747 – 833 (The Teaching Function) 2. Pages 109 – 118: “The Teaching Function: Book Three of the Code,” in <i>An Introduction to Canon Law</i>
June 1, 2026	Class Presentations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Each student will present the general topic of his or her Research Paper to the class. 2. The Class and professor will offer suggestions and constructive feedback. 3. Presentations are not graded. The exercise is meant to support students research process.

Professional Conduct Expectations

Attendance & Punctuality

Students are expected to attend all class sessions. Whether or not the assignments were announced during an absence, students are accountable for all course assignments.

Participation

Class participation is essential and will be graded. Students are expected to bring their questions, observations, and pastoral dilemmas and experiences during the course.

Communication

Email using our SCU email address will be our primary means of communication outside of class. You must check your SCU email and our course's Camino site every day to ensure you maintain a connection with the course content, your classmates, and your instructor.

Academic Integrity

The Academic Integrity pledge is an expression of the University's commitment to fostering an understanding of—and commitment to—a culture of integrity at Santa Clara University. The Academic Integrity pledge, which applies to all students, states:

I am committed to being a person of integrity. I pledge, as a member of the Santa Clara University community, to abide by and uphold the standards of academic integrity contained in the Student Conduct Code.

Academic integrity is part of your intellectual, ethical, and professional development. I expect you to uphold the principles of this pledge for all work in this class. I will clarify expectations on academic integrity -- including the use of AI tools such as ChatGPT and course sharing sites for all assignments and exams in this course. If you have questions about what is appropriate on any assignment, please let me know before you hand in work. For more resources about ensuring academic integrity in your work, see this [LibGuide on Academic Integrity](#).

Policies, Resources & Accommodations

Discrimination, Harassment, and Sexual Misconduct (Title IX)

Santa Clara University is committed to providing all students with a safe learning environment free of all forms of discrimination, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Please know that as a faculty member, California law SB 493 requires me to report any information brought to my attention about incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the SCU [Equal Opportunity and Title IX Office](#) (408) 551-3043. This includes, but is not limited to, disclosures in writing assignments, class discussions, and one-on-one conversations.

Should you need support, SCU has dedicated staff trained to assist you in navigating campus resources, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and filing a formal complaint with the University or with law enforcement. Please see the [Student Resources](#) page for more information about reporting options and resources.

If you or someone you know has experienced sexual harassment or sexual violence and wishes to speak to a confidential resource who is not required to report, please contact one of the following SCU resources for support:

- [SCU Wellness Center](#)
- [CAPS](#)
- Any individual (clergy, counselors) acting in a professional capacity for which confidentiality is mandated by law

I am happy to help connect you with any of these resources.

Accommodations for Pregnant and Parenting Students

Santa Clara University is committed to creating and maintaining a non-discriminatory learning environment for all students, including students who are pregnant or parenting. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy and childbirth will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can often arrange accommodations by working directly with their instructors, supervisors, or departments. Students needing accommodations can also seek assistance with accommodations from the [Office of Accessible Education](#) (OAE) or from the [Office of Equal Opportunity and Title IX](#). This [resource page](#) from the Title IX Office provides information regarding support for students and employees who are pregnant or parenting.

Office of Accessible Education

If you have a documented disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact the Office of Accessible Education oae@scu.edu, <https://www.scu.edu/oae> as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through OAE, please be sure to request your accommodations through your my OAE portal and discuss them with me during my office hours within the first two weeks of class. To ensure fairness and consistency, individual faculty members are required to receive verification from the Office of Accessible Education before providing accommodations. OAE will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assistive technology.

Students with approved accommodations of time and a half should talk with me as soon as possible. The Office of Accessible Education must be contacted in advance (at least two weeks' notice recommended) to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. Students should continue to reach out to OAE (oae@scu.edu) regarding access barriers related to this course or content.

Academic Freedom

The University is dedicated to an uncompromising standard of academic excellence and a commitment to [academic freedom](#), freedom of inquiry, and freedom of expression in the search for truth. We are here to engage a set of ideas and research findings that often have long and complicated histories. Scholars may disagree on the topics we will be discussing. Assignment of and references to sources (readings, films, websites, etc.) are not an endorsement of the opinions or content contained in those materials. Students are expected and required to become familiar with the

literature relevant to the topic of this course regardless of whether the professor, the University, or the students find this content agreeable. You are invited to introduce additional challenges in a serious and open-minded manner.

Safety Measures

In order to meet our learning objectives, we will adhere to the highest standards for safety and mutual respect. University policy allows faculty to require the use of face coverings in their classrooms. I may request that students wear face coverings occasionally or throughout the academic term. Failure to comply with my request is a violation of the [Student Conduct Code](#), which I will need to report.

Use of Classroom Recordings

Depending on the learning objectives and pedagogical approaches used in a lesson, some classes may be recorded and made available on Camino. However, in line with item 12 of the [Student Conduct Code](#), dissemination or sharing of any classroom recording without the permission of the instructor would be considered "misuse" and, therefore, prohibited. Violations of these policies may result in disciplinary action by the University. At the instructor's discretion, violations may also have an adverse effect on the student's grade.

Copyright Statement

Materials in this course are protected by the United States copyright laws. I am the copyright holder of the materials I create, including notes, handouts, slides, and videos. You may make copies of course materials for your own use and you may share the materials with other students enrolled in this course. You may not publicly distribute the course materials without my written permission.

Technology Support

Course materials and online activities will be available on SCU's Canvas learning management system (also known as Camino). Course reminders, readings, and assignments will be available through Camino.

SCU can provide you with technical assistance, and you can also reach out to our providers directly for questions. For Camino support, contact caminosupport@scu.edu or call 408-551-3572. You can also find support resources via the help button within the Camino platform (on the left-hand navigation) to access after-hours support via email, chat, or phone.

For Zoom assistance, contact Media Services at mediaservices@scu.edu or 408-554-4520. You can also get support from the [SCU website](#) or the [Zoom Help Center](#) website.

For SCU network and computing support, contact the SCU Technology Help Desk at techdesk@scu.edu or 408-554-5700. They can provide support for MySCU Portal, Eduroam, Duo, hardware and software issues, and more.

Respect for All

It is my intent that students from all backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students of all backgrounds bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my

intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of all identities and perspectives. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.

Wellness

I know you will do the best you can in this class (and all of your classes); however, it should never be at the expense of your own mental and physical health and your overall well-being. Jesuit education is grounded in cura personalis, concern for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit. What does this mean for you? Be kind to others, and more importantly, be kind to yourself. Attend to your sleep (quantity and quality); drink lots of water; move; get outside; and pay attention to beauty that isn't coming to you on a screen. Eat good food, laugh, enjoy friends and family, look for opportunities to connect with others in new ways, pray, meditate, or otherwise attend to your spirit. And ask for help, even if you don't think you need it. Lots of folks, including me, are here to support you. It's never too late to reach out, and I am committed to helping you.

SCU has many resources and programs to support you. These resources may be especially helpful:

Wellness Center

The Wellness center provides resources to aid and promote student well-being across the eight dimensions of wellness, including student peer groups for healthful living, violence prevention, and recovery.

CAPS

Santa Clara students are provided confidential counseling sessions at no cost through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS). Students have access to clinically appropriate, short-term therapy; group therapy; and other resources for care. A new 24/7 support line is also available: 408-554-5220.

SCU Culture of Care

If you are concerned for the mental or physical welfare of one of your peers, the Office of Student Life Culture of Care website provides resources for recognizing and helping someone in distress.

Academic Concerns

If you are concerned with your progress in this class, please contact me so that we can find solutions together.

- [The HUB Writing Center](#) (Writing and Public Speaking)

Grief Resources and Support

An important part of healing from loss is the support of others. The SCU community is committed to supporting you during this difficult time. If you need to miss class or foresee being late on upcoming deliverables due to bereavement, please let me know immediately so we can make appropriate arrangements. If you need additional support, you can contact the Dean of Student's

Office at (408) 554-4583 or email dso@scu.edu. Staff in DSO can notify other faculty and/or campus supervisors on your behalf and connect you with helpful campus resources.

Gender Inclusive Language

This course affirms people of all gender expressions and gender identities. If you go by a name different from what is on the class roster, please let me know. Using correct gender pronouns is important to me, so I encourage you to share your pronouns with me and correct me if I make a mistake. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me. For more on personal pronouns see www.mypronouns.org

Land Acknowledgement

Santa Clara University occupies the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ohlone and Muwekma Ohlone people.
