

*The Catholic Optic:  
Utopia, Dystopia, Art and Faith from the American Revolution to the Present Day*  
St. Augustine's Center-University of Idaho, Fall 2019

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**Instructor:** Dr. Gracjan Kraszewski, *Director of Intellectual Formation*, UI Vandal Catholic

**Office Hours:** TBA; 6-8 hrs/weekly at St. Augustine's Catholic Center, Univ. Idaho

**Classroom and Time:** Tuesdays and Thursdays from 7:30-9 am at St. Aug. Catholic Center-UI

**Course Description and Approach**

This is a multi-faceted class granting students a substantial chronological history of European and American events from 1776 to the present day. A hybrid art history, intellectual history, and literary criticism offering, the course's guiding paradigm is the "Catholic Optic," affording plentiful reflections on the high and low points of recent times under the umbrella of fallen humanity's attempts at betterment in an imperfect world.

**Grading Scale and Percentages**

Critical Essay	33%
Original Fiction Piece	34%
Final Exam (Comprehensive)	33%

**Required Books**

1. More, *Utopia*
2. Dostoevsky, *Underground Man*
3. Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World*
4. O'Connor, *Wiseblood*
5. Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos*
6. Weigel, *Cube and the Cathedral*

**Week by Week Lecture Themes plus Reading Selections**

\*TR=Tuesdays and Thursdays, w/corresponding dates and week's theme(s); ex.R1=Thurs. the 1st

**Aug**

TR27/29: Introduction: Dante, Aquinas, St. Francis, Christendom and the pre-1776/89 world

**Sep**

TR3/5: Russia from Peter to Catherine; Sobieski and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth;  
The Age of Absolutism up through the Revolutions in America (1776) and France (1789)

TR10/12: Manifest Destiny in America from the La. Purchase (1803) through 1848; Napoleon  
and Metternich up through the Revolutions of 1848.

TR17/19: Books: Discussion week of (1) More's *Utopia* and (2) Dostoevsky's *Underground Man*

TR24/26: America: 1848-1860 into The Civil War, 1861-65

**Oct**

TR1/3: Mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Europe through the 1880s; Reconstruction and Gilded Age America

TR8/10: *Fin de Siècle Europe*, American Imperialism, and the end of the 'Middle Ages' (to 1913)

TR15/17: Discussion, (3) Chesterton, *What's Wrong with the World* + bios of Catholic writers

TR22/24: World War I (1914-18), the Versailles Settlement, the 1920s in America and Europe

TR29/31: The Inter-War period from the 1930s on unto World War II (1939-1945)

## Nov

TR5/7: The Early Cold War (1950-1970) and the search for Meaning. Discussion (4) O'Connor  
TR12/14: The 1970s and 80s in America and Europe; to the end of the Cold War (1989) with  
a special focus on the election of Pope John Paul II and the Polish Solidarity Movement.  
TR19/21: Discussion, (5), Percy, *Lost in the Cosmos* and the meaning (or lack of) post-modernity  
T26: The 1990s up to the present day: Can American go it alone in a unipolar world? *\*no class, Thanksgiving the 28<sup>th</sup>.*

## Dec

TR3/5: Discussion (6), Weigel, *The Cube and the Cathedral* and notes on the “New Evangelization”  
TR10/12: Submissions week: Critical Essay due; Final Exam to be held; group presentations of Original fiction pieces.

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### *Supplementary Information:*

#### Monthly Lectures List

Each month, I will present a lecture in support of VandalCatholic Encounter, in coordination with Campus Ministry  
Here are the tentative themes, subject to change.

#### September 2019

*Why Catholic Art—and Catholic Literature in Particular—Matters; especially Today*

#### October 2019

*Faith & Athletics: chasing impossible perfection as preparation for the only perfection that matters*

#### November 2019

*Faith and Politics: Should American Catholics demand a true third Party option?*

#### December 2019

*The Incarnation and Christian Mirth: Essentialism in a time of post-Cartesian splintering*