Councils of Reunion and Reform
Syllabus PH 4055
Spring 2012
Prof. J. H. Martin, O.P.

Syllabus

The effect of a General Council can be compared to that of a stone dropped into a pool of water, the rings produced by the stone from the point of impact form circles that ultimately cover the whole of the pool. The Councils of Constance (1414-18), Basel (1431-1449) and Florence (1438) produced such a rippling effect that lasted beyond the generation which produced them. The Council of Constance was called to heal the disastrous papal schism caused by the flawed election of two popes in the year, 1378. There was an immediate call to recover unity in the church and because of problems arising during the schism there was an additional call for a thorough reform of the church in head and members. Contemporaneous with the Councils the 15th century also saw nation states being formed, the remnants of the old feudal order dismantled and the new development of banking, credit and money. Ecclesiastics and civil leaders had to look for new formulae that would both draw the different factions of the church together and at the same time would be acceptable to new currents of the 14th century. This course will be concerned with new theories of the ecclesiastical government and reform of the church in head and members.

Method:

The seminar method will be employed with lectures in the first weeks to set the scene. Students will begin to consult on the topic they wish to pursue for their major paper (of c. 20-25 pages). Before Reading Week materials that concerned the Council of Basel and Florence will be discussed. The seminar will conclude with an assessment of the influence of these Councils for the later life of the church.

Expectations

A short presentation or book review given at one of the sessions (15%). An overview in class of topic for the final paper (10%); a final paper (20-25 pgs. with appropriate bibliography) 75%.

Class Meetings

Thurs. 6:10-8:34 pm
Room 18
Bibliography
PH 4055


*Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima...Joannes Dominicus*, Mansi... Paris: H. Welter (1901-1927) Often cited simply as Mansi.
