Dominican School of Philosophy and Theology

Institute of Salesian Studies - Spring 2020

HS 2443: Don Bosco’s Environment

3.0 units (5 ECTS) – Monday: 9:40-12:30, ISS
Instructor: Joseph Boenzi, SDB
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Course Description

The course examines the social, political, cultural and religious context in which St John Bosco (1815-1888), an innovative Christian educator and spiritual director, lived and worked. Don Bosco (as he is familiarly known) became so influential that his outreach to needy youth continues, not only in his native Italy, but in 132 countries around the globe.

The objective of this course: to make a synthesis, at least in its fundamental points, that will allow us to reflect on the figure of Don Bosco in his own context and then to ransom his image as it is held captive by the conditioning of his times, to bring his insights into the contemporary world. In this way we can let his experiences speak to us as we attempt to deal with challenges that the Salesian family must confront today.

Expectations

Teaching method: HS2443 is primarily a survey course. My presentations will highlight critical periods in Don Bosco’s life, in the social, political, cultural and religious context in which he lived and worked. And since biography can be a tool for understanding history and theology, the presentations will examine the conflicts between Church and State, movements of industrialization and subsequent mass migrations, political movements toward Italian nationhood, and the conditions of the young people among whom Don Bosco worked, and who were directly impacted by tumultuous social and cultural conditions during that century of unprecedented change.

Through lectures, PowerPoint presentations or other means, I will attempt to help you to visualize the times and personages that you will be studying; I provide a text to coincide with my lectures and to develop material at greater depth. I shall also indicate some primary source documents that emanate from the periods and movements under examination. At key intervals we will dedicate time to group work and class discussion.

Student roles: While I hope to provide you with positive input, I do believe that you and your classmates have the greatest role in creating a good learning environment. In this context, let me state clearly what are my expectations in terms of your participation in the course. I expect that you will attend all the class sessions; if there is a serious reason that prevents you from doing so, I would appreciate your speaking to me about your absence. I expect that you will participate in group projects, giving everyone a chance to speak and building on one another’s contributions (I believe that students add breadth and depth to the course for one another). Finally, I expect that you will complete reading and written assignments in a timely fashion.
**Learning outcomes**

By the end of this course, you will have gained an overview of the social, political, cultural and religious aspects of that environment forming Don Bosco’s world view and pastoral priorities.

You will have learned some of the principles of historiography, and honed skills in critical analysis of written text through participation in class/group discussions and by developing a research techniques in an organized fashion.

**Tools for assessment**

In addition to attendance and class participation, your learning in this course will be assessed on the basis of class discussions and three key assignments in the form of two reflection papers and one final class presentation.

**Scheduling**

HS2195 is slated to meet on Mondays during 2nd and 3rd periods (9:40-12:30) in ISS Room 1. During the second week of the semester we will firm up the instruction calendar and due dates for assignments; lecture schedules and reading deadlines will be finalized during the third week of class.

**Texts**


**Course Outline - Topics to Cover**

Unit 1: A Panorama of Nineteenth-Century Italy

Brush strokes of Don Bosco’s Italy
Geo-political situation
Italy in 1815
Religious Realities in Restoration Italy
Romanticism
Return to the values of earlier times

Unit 2: The Restoration and the Church

Papacy’s Enhanced Role
Lay involvement
Nineteenth-Century Spirituality of Anxiety
Marian devotion during the nineteenth century
Mission Movement
Apostolate of the Press:
Catholic Friendships and Secret Societies
Political situation

Unit 3: Church Leadership during the Restoration and Risorgimento
Archbishops of Turin during the Nineteenth Century
The Popes of the Nineteenth Century

Unit 4: The grass-roots Church in Turin
Seminary formation in Turin during the Restoration.
Alternative formation for priests: The Pastoral Institute of Turin

Unit 5: Public Assistance and Christian Welfare – Opera Barolo
Juliette Colbert de Maulèvrier and Tancredi Falletti di Barolo: Operative charity
Prison reform, refuge for exploited girls, Religious communities, Parish reform
Spirituality as laity in the style of Francis de Sales
Advancing Christian education and making an impact on the Church of Turin

Unit 6: The Unification of Italy - 1848-1870
Democracy, Unification and Catholic Attitudes
Everything at 48
Intervening years: Piedmont jockeys for a unified Italy
Second War of Independence
The Expedition of the 1000
1861 - Italy’s First Parliament
Education as the path to Italian identity

Unit 7: Pius IX and the Roman Question
Shortcomings of a leader
Syllabus 1864
Vatican I
The Law of Guarantees

Unit 8: Church in the aftermath of Unification
New lay movements in Italy
Don Bosco and the Laity
Lines of spirituality in the second part of the century
Political and Social Problems

Unit 9: Open to the future: Don Bosco’s approach to religious and social problems
Associations
The founding of schools as valid youth work
Information and Communications
Total environment

Unit 10. Don Bosco’s young people: The conditions of pre-industrial youth in Don Bosco’s times
Social Scene of Don Bosco’s Turin
The young in Don Bosco’s times
Don Bosco’s young people

Unit 11. Don Bosco’s Marian Devotion
The Marian Tide of the 1800s: Historical Events
First elements of Marian piety
Mary as Protector and Guide through Life
How Don Bosco speaks of Mary to young people
Immaculate Conception
The Help of Christians
The image of the Blessed Virgin Mary and a wider apostolic outreach

Unit 12. New Communities for the Salvation of Youth
Socio-religious problems of the clergy
Separation of Church and State
Salesians for the regeneration and salvation of Society
Sense of family and Salesian Family

Primary sources (in translation):


Selected bibliography

Historical Resources


Dicastero per la Formazione, Il tempo di Don Bosco [Pro-manuscripto, Sussidi 1]. Frascati: Giammarioli, 1986.

Other Resources


_____.. Il prete piemontese nell’Ottocento: tra la rivoluzione francese e la rivoluzione industriale. Torino: SEI, 1972

