

Margaret R. Pfeil
Personal Statement for
Renewal and Promotion

Introduction

In 2013, the Theology Department and the Center for Social Concerns agreed upon a Memorandum of Understanding to establish the joint appointment that I have held. It provided for a work distribution of teaching (50%), service in both units (40%), and scholarship (10%). In accordance with our departmental CA/CRPT document, I will address each of these areas in turn, as well as the categories of broader service and contribution to mission.

Teaching (50%)

The MOU framing my position specifies a teaching load of 2:2, with at least one course per term involving a community-based component. Over the last six years, I have developed a tri-campus course with Chris Cobb (St. Mary's College), and Shawn Storer (Holy Cross College), Theo 20672, "Sustainability @ ND/SMC/HCC and the Holy Cross Charism." It began as a two-credit overload during the fall semester. As of Fall 2020, it became a three-credit course that satisfies the second theology requirement in the new core curriculum, with crosslists in Sustainability and Catholic Social Tradition. Dr. Rachel Novick, former Director of Notre Dame's Sustainability Minor, was also part of the original teaching collaborative until 2017 and continued to be actively involved through last year.

This course uses *Laudato si'* as its guiding thread, while also holding in conversation aspects of the charism of the Congregation of Holy Cross as manifested in distinct ways across the three campuses. Every year, we as a teaching team respond to students' insights and suggestions in shaping the next iteration. For Fall 2020, since our usual off-campus visits with community partners were not possible due to the pandemic, we were able to use Zoom to good effect, helping our students develop a learning network with members of our local community deeply invested in regenerative agriculture and sustainability efforts. I think positive student feedback indicated the fruit of this effort, as well as their appreciation of more in-depth conversations about the course material using the Sakai platform.

One particular innovation inspired by our constraints was a more personally formative approach linking the midterm deliverable with the final project in the form of a contemplative ecological practice adopted by each student over the course of the semester. Throughout the semester, students had the opportunity to discuss their chosen practices with one another through a theological lens and in conversation with their respective fields of study. I would say an academic highlight of this past pandemic year for me was the privilege of hearing their insights about how this course helped shape their processes of vocational discernment in light of the growing climate crisis. Students' overall growth in contemplative awareness is an important goal of our course and certainly a sign of hope in the face of great suffering locally and globally.

In dynamic class conversation at the end of the term, students offered very helpful suggestions that we are hoping to incorporate in the Fall 2021 version. Chief among these is to resume off-campus

visits with community partners, which we certainly hope to do. They also highly recommended continuance of weekly small group Zoom meetings. Each group offered a summary report of their discussion in conversation with the assigned readings and class activities for the week. I am grateful to Bill Mattison for sharing his version of this assignment, which I was able to adapt for our course.

Each fall semester, I also teach Theo 20625, “Discipleship: Loving Action for Justice,” which is designed to encourage theological reflection in relation to eight weeks of immersion work that students undertake through the CSC’s Summer Service Learning Program (SSLP), as well as the international version (ISSLP). First developed by Fr. Don McNeill, C.S.C., a version of this course dates back to the 1980’s. Since assuming this course in 2002, I have adapted the material each year in conversation with students’ questions and research interests sparked by their summer work and broader academic trajectories. The course is discussion-based, and the final class sessions are devoted to students’ synthetic appropriation of Catholic social thought in conversation with their own immersion experiences, with a view toward next steps in their intellectual and personal growth. The (I)SSLP often serves as a springboard for thesis and capstone projects in Theology as well as other disciplinary majors and minors, and this course frequently helps students distill and shape their research ideas toward those ends.

Typically in the spring, I teach a community-based learning course, Theo 20643, “Askesis of Nonviolence.” Capped at 25 students to better facilitate involvement in the local community, I am aware that the demand for this course is greater, and I used to teach one section of it each semester before the advent of the tri-campus sustainability course. Structured around the beatitudes, this course considers moral exemplars of nonviolence in conversation with Scripture and the Judeo-Christian tradition, with an emphasis on students’ own exploration of contemplative practices of nonviolence. They are invited to adopt a spiritual discipline throughout the semester, and often, these become habits that extend beyond the end of the course. Having taught this course since 2008, I find it very gratifying and humbling to hear from former students, now alumni, about the ensuing fruits they trace back to our Theo 20643 learning community. I continue to learn alongside them about the theological implications of nonviolence in ways that nourish each successive version of the course. I believe the need for further study of and formation in nonviolence is all the more pressing as the climate crisis deepens and access to potable water is predicted to be the leading cause of armed conflict in the near future.

Every spring term, I also offer Theo 40613/60614, “Catholic Social Teaching.” Due to the pandemic, I offered an additional online iteration of this course for Theology Majors and Minors in Summer 2020, credited in the fall term, to cover a gap in the SSLP’s planned curriculum. This extra course was beyond my job description, but I was happy to serve the needs of both the Theology Department and the CSC at a critical juncture. I look forward to offering another online version of it in Spring 2022 for the M.A. Program.

Generally, each academic term I also consult on CSC academic courses and offer talks for CSC programs and events on various theological topics. This past spring, because the CSC Seminars Program was understaffed, I took on an additional 1-credit course, “Spirituality of Justice,” with a focus on migration and immigration. That also afforded me the opportunity to assist in supervising an M.Div. student who served as a member of the teaching team as part of her field education work. Both the course and this supervisory role extended beyond the letter of my job description but certainly aligned with its spirit.

For the last several years, I have also advised at least one undergraduate Theology thesis writer annually and have consulted on or advised various M.Div. Synthesis Seminar projects. Being available for

general scholarly consultation is a significant aspect of my work, and one that I relish, as further research ideas and connections often emerge mutually from the fertile ground of these conversations.

Openness to the mutual teaching and learning process shapes my pedagogical approach in general as I strive to improve my syllabi each term and become a more effective teacher. In recent semesters, particularly during the pandemic, I have increasingly moved away from exams as an assessment tool and relied more upon short responses on the Sakai Forum due before each class session and longer portfolio assignments that decenter my role as the instructor and shift the focus toward students' own learning goals. In the process, I have been delighted by the ways in which students have contributed to our learning community and responded to one another.

Over the years, creating space for students' expressions of their own gifts, experience, and knowledge has become a high priority in my approach to teaching. In our Theo 20643 course just before the pandemic shutdown, one student who had interned at the Snite Museum approached me about the possibility of engaging with a particular photo that she had recently helped acquire for the museum. She noticed that it could fit well with a class session that focused on Pedro Arrupe's firsthand reflection on the aftermath of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. We were able to visit the Snite as a class, and this particular student co-facilitated with me a discussion of the atomic war photo exhibit in relation to our readings. It was through that process that our class learned that members of her own family were survivors of the Hiroshima bombing as well as the internment of Japanese Americans in California during World War II. Her generosity and vulnerability opened space for deep theological engagement with one another and our course material that shaped the rest of our semester together.

In June 2021, I took part in a Kaneb Center reading group with CSC colleagues focused on bell hooks' collection of essays, *Teaching to Transgress*. Her emphasis on engaged pedagogy and the mutuality of relationships in the classroom resonates with my own teaching philosophy and also encourages me to think more creatively about ways to ensure safe space for participation of every member of the class, particularly students of color.

Toward this end, I often use the circle process, a practice with roots in indigenous traditions around the world in which I was trained in 2012. It ensures that every person has the opportunity to contribute in a discussion, but no one is forced to do so. For those who might be more reserved, it has proven quite effective in creating space for their participation.

Each year, I review my syllabi with a view toward incorporating the work of scholars of color. In 2006, I organized a conference at Notre Dame on white privilege in relation to the discipline of theology, and while some progress has been made since that time in addressing the effects of white supremacy on and within our field, much work remains to be done both in the classroom and in theological scholarship. As a Euro American scholar, I have much to learn about my own complicity in systemic white supremacy and am grateful for opportunities to address this together with others in the Notre Dame community and the broader theological guild.

Scholarship (10%)

Though scholarship accounts for only ten percent of my position, I find, like many in our department, that teaching and research mutually inform one another. Driving my own teaching and research trajectory are several vocational commitments, including active nonviolence, peace studies, racial justice, ecumenism, ecological ethics, Latin American liberation theology, and the Catholic social

tradition. Each of these interests has emerged from my own narrative and occupies an important space in my self-understanding as a theologian dedicated to praxis.

In recent years, I have been pleased to deepen my knowledge of integral ecology through a theological lens. This resulted in a book chapter for a volume just published by Liturgical Press and edited by Shawn Copeland and Laurie Cassidy, *Desire, Darkness, and Hope. Theology in a Time of Impasse*, a *festchrift* celebrating the work of Carmelite scholar, Sr. Connie FitzGerald. I have often included her work in my courses, and this chapter offered a fine opportunity to gather my thoughts from years of classroom conversations with students, holding the concept of impasse and the dark night experience in conversation with the climate crisis. I am looking forward to sharing this text with students in the future and discovering what further avenues of exploration might emerge in the process.

Having had the opportunity as a Fellow of the Kroc Institute to join a delegation to the Vatican's 2017 conference, "A World Without Nuclear Weapons," I have been working since that time on materials that could help form consciences, particularly in the U.S. context, with regard to nuclear disarmament. Issues of conscience and conscientious objection have long been a research interest of mine that connects directly with material in my Catholic social teaching course.

Thanks in no small measure to conversations with students in that course over many years, I was able to distill my work on conscience in an invited talk at Georgetown University in January 2020. A *Sojourners* editor who was in attendance then invited me to publish a shorter version for a popular audience. That piece came out in August 2020, and I was then able to refer to it in my Catholic social teaching course this past spring as we considered the significance of Pope Francis' encouragement of more theological and ecclesial work directed toward nuclear disarmament. Buoyed by our vibrant class discussion, I am so grateful for my students as thoughtful conversation partners, particularly as I will now be writing a book chapter on this same topic for an edited volume requested by the Holy See and edited by Drew Christiansen, S.J., *Forbidden: Receiving Pope Francis' Condemnation of Nuclear Weapons* (Georgetown University Press, forthcoming 2022).

My commitment to nonviolence overlaps with my involvement in Mennonite-Catholic ecumenical dialogue over nearly twenty years through Bridgefolk, an organization of Catholics drawn to the Anabaptist peace witness and Mennonites attracted to Catholic sacramental and contemplative practices. Together with a Mennonite colleague, I have just finished editing a manuscript that resulted from two Bridgefolk conferences that I helped organize and moderate, one at Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS, 2015) and one at Notre Dame (2016). Contributors from Canada, the U.S., and Japan reflected on the meaning of intercessory prayer and the communion of saints in each tradition. I am grateful to John Cavadini and Kim Belcher for their generous contributions to the second gathering and the resulting volume of essays.

The 2021 Bridgefolk annual conference will convene virtually in August to address the theme, "Called Together to Face Racial Injustice: Starting Close In." I am honored to co-facilitate the final, synthetic session with Nekeisha Alayna Alexis of AMBS, and our main goal will be to help participants identify concrete action steps that they will undertake in their own personal commitments to confront racial injustice as well as systemic and institutional dynamics that Bridgefolk, a majority Euro American ecumenical movement, needs to address.

Service Work for the CSC and the Theology Department (40%)

I have been very grateful to contribute to the missions of both the CSC and the Theology Department over these last years, serving on several committees in both units and making more specific contributions as needed. In our department, I have been pleased to serve on the Collegiate Committee for many years and to be available for guest lectures and discussions with students as needed. As the department reimagined the M.Div. curriculum, I was happy to serve on the ad hoc committee dedicated to that task and look forward to serving on the M.Div. Committee beginning in Fall 2021.

Because the CSC has been going through a transition in leadership over the last year and a half, I dedicated more time than usual there, well beyond the scope of my job description. In addition to my regular committee assignments (Catholic Social Tradition, Curriculum, and the Faculty Group), I was also elected to serve as chairperson of the CSC Faculty Group as well as on a faculty subcommittee to draft the CSC's Organizational Plan for the Committee on Appointments and the Committee on Reappointments and Promotion, which was approved by the Provost's Office in May 2021. I also served on the Flourishing CSC Committee which was tasked with developing CSC working groups for AY 2020-21, and I then served on the Mission Working Group to help draft a new CSC mission statement. Through the Spring 2021 term, I was honored to be one of three CSC staff and faculty chosen by our peers to serve on the Provost Office's Search Committee for the CSC Executive Director position.

In response to the pandemic, I co-created and co-hosted a new CSC podcast with Dan Graff, my CSC colleague in History and Director of the Higgins Labor Research Center. "Speaking of Dignity" focused on the experiences of those whose work was deemed essential but whose working conditions entailed great and often uncompensated risk for the sake of the common good. Some of these podcast episodes, in turn, served as course material in several CSC seminars.

Over the last year, I was also part of the planning committee for the CSC's March 2021 international (virtual) conference commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the 1971 synodal text, *Justice in the World*, during which I moderated a session on the sexual abuse crisis in the Catholic Church and delivered a panel presentation on contemplative ecology and theology. As a final conference event, I planned and led a Holy Saturday virtual retreat, "Cry of the Earth, Cry of the Poor," inviting participants to hold together lament and hope in relation to the climate crisis. With Clemens Sedmak, I am currently co-editing a special issue of the *Journal of Catholic Social Thought* dedicated to *Justice in the World* which will include some scholarly work generated by this conference.

My role also involves connecting the CSC with other campus units. This happens principally through teaching as well as guest lectures in others' courses and invitations to offer more formative workshops. At the end of the spring term, I was pleased to be able to design and facilitate a series of three workshops for Notre Dame's Department of Development on "Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Unity in Light of Catholic Social Teaching." I have also offered numerous talks in support of other units' programs and initiatives, including Notre Dame International, the Ford Family Program for Integral Human Development, the deNicola Center for Ethics and Culture, the McGrath Institute for Church Life, Campus Ministry, the Kroc Institute, the Kellogg Institute, the Office of Mission and Identity, the Sustainability Minor Program, Multicultural Student Programs and Services, the Alumni Association, and the Klau Center for Civil and Human Rights, among others. I was honored to be invited in Fall 2020 to become a Fellow of the Klau Center and hope that this role might afford more opportunities to facilitate connections with both the Theology Department and the CSC.

More recently, I have begun conversations with Notre Dame's Office of Public Affairs, the Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate, and the Lab for Economic Opportunity to consider opportunities for community-based research in South Bend on the issue of affordable housing as a much needed expression of the University's mission.

General Service and Contribution to Mission

During the pandemic year alone, I offered more than fifteen different talks, retreats, and workshops online for campus, national, and international audiences, and it is my steadfast hope that this work has contributed fruitfully to the University's mission (see p.13 of my *curriculum vitae*).

In the broader context of ecclesial mission, I have been committed to serving the theological needs of the church and was honored to offer a course in Catholic Social Tradition to candidates for the diaconate in the Diocese of Ft. Wayne - South Bend (Fall 2019). At the invitation of Bishop Rhoades, I will give a talk on the preferential option for the poor at the annual continuing education workshop for diocesan priests and deacons in October 2021.

In addition to participating in Vatican consultations on nuclear disarmament, I also took part in an international theological research process requested by the Vatican on a theology of nonviolence, helping to draft a portion of the resulting white paper on pneumatology and Scripture in relation to nonviolence. I have also been honored to consult with the USCCB and the Holy See's Dicastery for Integral Human Development on implementation of *Laudato si'* in the U.S. context. Finally, it has been especially gratifying to consult with officials in the Archdiocese of New York on Dorothy Day's cause for canonization.

For many years, I have accompanied students, faculty, and staff in spiritual direction, having undertaken more formal training through the Shalem Institute in 2013-14. I have enjoyed connecting with Fr. Frank Murphy to expand Campus Ministry's list of available directors with an eye toward broadening its ecumenical scope. I think this sort of pastoral accompaniment is an essential aspect of the University's mission to form the whole person. Listening for the Holy Spirit at work in another person's journey helps ground me as a theologian, a humbling reminder of the final end toward which all creation is being drawn by God.

In the context of service in the local community, I am grateful to be part of the Saint Peter Claver Catholic Worker Community and to offer leadership at our apostolate, Our Lady of the Road, as Volunteer Director for the last decade and most recently as Board President. As the pandemic unfolded, we were able to use private donations to move over one hundred people from tent encampments into motel rooms beginning in August 2020, launching the Motels4Now Program. St. Joseph County then granted more than \$1 million in funding to continue this program from October 2020 through at least September 2021. The county is now considering the possibility of making this a permanent, low-barrier intake center for people experiencing homelessness in our region.

Through the spring and summer months of 2021, Our Lady of the Road has hosted a weekly vaccination clinic for the St. Joseph County Health Department. We have also distributed over \$250,000 in Emergency Rental Assistance, federal funding made available by the county as a means of preventing evictions related to the pandemic. I have also been honored to represent Our Lady of the Road on the Mayor of South Bend's Implementation Team on Homelessness for the past year. Being named a 2021

honoree by Michiana Women Leaders is a recognition I share with all the staff and volunteers of our Catholic Worker community.

From my social location at the Catholic Worker and Our Lady of the Road, I have worked regularly with Notre Dame students formally through CSC programs like the McNeill Leadership Fellows and the SSLP; Campus Ministry's RCIA Program and Mercy Works; Echo, ACE, and the Law School; and, the Theology Department's M.Div. Field Education Program, for which I serve annually as a site supervisor and occasionally as a spiritual director. Informally, I typically work with many students each year who express a desire to become involved in the local community. In both cases, I seek to help them connect their academic interests, including theological exploration, with needs in the local community. I am especially committed to accompanying them as they discern their vocations, and I see this as one of the most important contributions I can make to Notre Dame's mission of holistic formation "as learning becomes service to justice" (University Mission Statement).

I will conclude by expressing my deep gratitude to the Theology Department, the Center for Social Concerns, and the University for the opportunity to live out my own vocation as a theologian, teacher, scholar, and practitioner. It has been such a tremendous, humbling gift.

Margaret R. Pfeil