

Ignatian Education Seminar

HPRH 3075 R02

Fordham University, Spring 2025

Location: Alpha House

Time: 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Professor Nicholas Tampio

Office Hours: Before class, Faber Hall
665

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Course description

What are some of the distinguishing features of a Jesuit education? Required courses in philosophy and theology. Encouragement to do research. Opportunities to participate in clubs and sports teams and do internships. Most young people around the world do not get this kind of college education. In this seminar, we ask why the architects of Jesuit education designed the system this way and how we want to continue the tradition.

The course is largely staged as a conversation with John Henry Newman. Newman was an evangelical academic at the University of Oxford who converted to Catholicism and helped found the Catholic University of Ireland in 1854. At the opening of the university, he delivered a series of lectures to primarily Irish working-class parents selling them on the idea of a Catholic college education. These lectures, published as *The Idea of a University*, shed light on the thinking behind many of the distinctive features of a Fordham University education.

In the first half of each class, I will lead discussion of a theme in *The Idea of a University*. In the second half, students will lead discussion of a current debate in higher education, including whether students should be required to take classes in Catholic theology and Greek philosophy, whether students should be nudged to do internships, and whether Fordham should lean into the natural sciences.

Required book

John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Yale University Press, ISBN-13: 978-0300064056

Required assignment

Students will be required to prepare a two-sided handout, write a 5–7-page paper, and lead discussion during one class. You may upload the paper and handout to Blackboard. Please sign up here: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bQ-byhiJr9Ivms26hEqS1RNRJji-oKw_bpzr0e4unE4/edit?tab=t.0

Advice for writing the paper. Read a handful of articles about the topic. Search the archive of Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education, Jesuits Magazine, or America Magazine.

Grade

Class attendance	33%
Handout and leading discussion	33%
5-7-page paper	34%

Course Schedule

January 21 – Should Fordham students be required to take two classes in Catholic theology?

Cardinal Newman was sympathetic to the idea of a research university where professors and students specialized in their majors and research interests. At the same time, he maintained that theology was the key discipline of the university. Is that right? Do you think that students at Jesuit Universities should take two Catholic theology classes to graduate?

The Idea of a University, Discourses I-IV

February 11 – Should Fordham students be required to take two classes in Greek philosophy?

Most students around the world do not take a liberal arts education. The United States might be the only country in the world where future lawyers need to earn an undergraduate degree first. Cardinal Newman had to explain to working class Irish families why they should pay extra to get their children a liberal arts education. He argued that knowledge is worthwhile for its own sake, studying the liberal arts sharpens your mind and teaches you how to think, and prepares you for a leadership role in society. Do you buy these arguments?

The Idea of a University, Discourses V-VI

March 11 – Should Fordham students be nudged to do internships?

Families send young people to college with the expectation that they will eventually start a career. Many people, in Newman's time and ours', expect students to learn specific vocational skills. Newman makes an argument that learning to think prepares one for many jobs, just like having a healthy body is good in itself and valuable for anything else that one might do. Do you think that students should do internships in the summer? Or is it better to backpack through Europe?

The Idea of a University, Discourse VII

April 15 – Should Fordham lean into the natural sciences?

Cardinal Newman had an interest in the natural sciences and took courses in mineralogy and geology. For Newman, “truth cannot be contrary to truth,” and Catholics did not have to fear studying science. At the same time, many theists are or become atheists, and certain members of Fordham think that the school can never compete with an MIT or a Stanford and should focus on its strengths in the humanities. What do you think? Should Fordham become a hard science school?

“Christianity and Physical Science,” “Christianity and Scientific Investigation”