

PETER CAJKA

DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
310L O'SHAUGHNESSY HALL, NOTRE DAME, IN
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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

Associate Teaching Professor	2026-
Director of Undergraduate Studies	2020-
Assistant Teaching Professor	2020-2026
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of American Studies	2019-2020
Postdoctoral Fellow, Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism	2017-2019

EDUCATION

BOSTON COLLEGE, PH.D., AMERICAN HISTORY	2017
MARQUETTE UNIVERSITY, M.A. HISTORY	
2010	
UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON, B.A. HISTORY, <i>MAGNA CUM LAUDE</i>	2008

PUBLICATIONS AND WORKS IN PROGRESS

BOOKS

Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church and the Spirit of the Sixties.

University of Chicago Press, 2021.

Paperback to be released in 2026

Review Forum: *The Catholic Historical Review*, 108 (2022): 173-188.

Review Essays: *The US Catholic Historian*, 40 (2022): 96-101.

Reviews: *The Journal of American History*, *The American Historical Review*, *Commonweal*, *The Political Theology Network*, *Politics and Religion*, *Religious Studies Review*, *American Catholic Studies*, *The Catholic Library World*, *The Journal of Moral Theology*.

MANUSCRIPT IN PROGRESS

The Confessions of Father Miller: A Priest, His Abuse, and American Catholic History

REFEREED ARTICLES

“Transfers of Power: Moving Father Miller, 1956-2003,” accepted for publication in *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*, forthcoming, 2026.

“The Body’s American Moment, 1979-1993,” *Modern Intellectual History*, (2026):1-24.
[Available here](#).

“A Military Surge for God: Archbishop Robert Lucey, Lyndon Johnson, and the Vietnam War,” *The Journal of Church and State*, 64 (2022): 301-321.

“‘This May Help Us and the Whole Cause of Due Process’: Father Joseph Byron, the Washington Nineteen, and American Catholic Priests as Sixties Rebels,” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics, and Culture* 14 (2021): 74-96.

“C. Ellis Nelson, Liberal Protestants, and the Rise of the Catholic Theology of Conscience, 1944-1987,” *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 35 (Summer 2017), 47-74.

“Riding with St. Paul in the Passenger Side: The Archdiocese of Milwaukee Enters the Automobile Age, 1920-1965,” *American Catholic Studies* 121 (Summer 2010), 65-93.
Winner of Catholic Press Award for Best Feature Article in a Scholarly Magazine

BOOK CHAPTERS

“‘Each Individual Catholic Does and Can Form His Own Conscience on This and Every Other Subject’”: John Ford, S.J., and the Theology of Conscience, 1941-1969,” in *Crossings and Dwellings: Restored Jesuits, Women Religious, American Experience, 1814-2014* ed. Kyle B. Roberts and Stephen Schlosser, (Brill, 2017), 567-602.

“After Moyn: Historians, Catholicism, and Human Rights,” in *Social Catholicism in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. William F. Murphy, (Pickwick, 2024), 40-61.

BOOK REVIEWS

Review of Kevin O’Neill, *Unforgivable: An Abusive Priest and the Church that Sent Him Abroad*. *Church History*, 94 (June 2026): 762-764.

Review of Richard Gribble, *The Life of Cardinal Humberto Medeiros: Whatever God Wants*, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 111, (Spring 2025): 414-418.

Review of Mary Jude Brown, *Heresy in the Heartland: The Controversy at the University of Dayton, 1960-1967*, *American Catholic Studies*, 135 (Fall 2024): 98-100.

- Review of Michael D. Breidenbach, *Our Dear-Bought Liberty: Catholics and Religious Toleration in Early America*, Church History, 92 (2023): 738-739.
- Review of Robin G. Vose, *The Index of Prohibited Books: Four Centuries of Struggle Over Word and Image for the Greater Glory of God*, Reading Religion, November 2022, [published online](#).
- Review Essay, Matthew Levering, *The Abuse of Conscience: A Century of Catholic Moral Theology*, U.S. Catholic Historian, 40 (2022): 87-95.
- Review Essay, “Decolonizing Knowledge with Brenna Moore and Onaje X. Woodbine,” (2022). *Kindred Spirits: Friendship and Resistance at the Edges of Modern Catholicism* (Brenna Moore) and *Take Back What the Devil Stole: An African American Prophet’s Encounters with the Spirit World* (Onaje X.O. Woodbine), Political Theology, [published online](#).
- Review of D.G. Hart, *American Catholic: The Politics of Faith During the Cold War*, Church History, 90 (2021): 990-992.
- Review of Katherine D. Moran, *The Imperial Church: Catholic Founding Fathers and United States Empire*, The Annals of Iowa 80 (Spring 2021): 160-162.
- Review of Catherine Osbourne, *American Catholic and the Church of Tomorrow*, Syndicate Symposium, September (2019): [published online](#).
- Review of James Fisher and Margaret McGuinness, eds., *Roman Catholicism in the United States: a Thematic History*, American Catholic Studies 130 (2019): 75-76.
- Review of Catherine Osborne and Mark Massa, eds. *American Catholic History: A Documentary Reader*, Church History and Religious Culture 99 (2019): 111-113.
- Review of Karen Johnson, *One in Christ: Chicago Catholics and the Quest for Interracial Justice*, American Catholic Studies Newsletter 46 (2019): 38, 49.
- Review of Steven Avella, *Crisis and Confidence: A History of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee*, American Catholic Studies, 126 (2015): 105-107.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Small Research Grant	2025
Franco Family Institute for the Liberal Arts & the Common Good	
Teaching Beyond the Classroom Mid-Size Grant	2025
The A. Bartlett Giamatti Fellowship	2024
Yale University	
1-Month Residential Fellowship	
The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library	
Young Scholar of American Religion	2022-2024

Multi-year fellowship for teaching and research on American Religion Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture Indiana University, Purdue University Indianapolis	
Louisville Institute Dissertation Fellowship	2016-2017
US Embassy/BAAS Small Grant Program, Award from US Embassy and British Association of American Studies Program	2017
Dean's Summer Session Teaching Fellowship	2016
Fellow, Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy	2014-2016
Summer Research Grant, American Catholic Historical Association	2014
Dorothy Mohler Research Grant, The American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives, the Catholic University of America	2014
Summer Research Grant, Boston College Center for Human Rights and International Justice	2014
Travel Grant, Clough Center for Constitutional Democracy	2014
Forum Scientarium Funded Participant, Religion and Secularism in Modern Democracies, with Charles Taylor	2013
Research Fellowship, Department of History, Boston College	2013-2014
Junior Scholar Research Grant, Boston College Center for Christian-Jewish Learning	2013
Manning/Gelfand Summer Research Fellowship, Boston College History Department	2013
Best Feature Article in a Scholarly Magazine, Catholic Press Conference	2011
Richard Scharburg Student Paper Award, The Society of Automobile Historians	2008
The Dr. George Ruppel Award of Excellence in Historical Research	2008
The Caroline Beauregard Memorial Award of Excellence, Outstanding Junior	2007

MEDIA/OTHER PUBLICATIONS

Interview, Live Television, "No Kings Day," WNDU, South Bend, Indiana. June 16, 2025

Interview, Live Television, "[What to Know Historically and Legally about the LA Immigration Protests.](#)" WNDU, South Bend, Indiana. June 9, 2025.

Interview, "[What Power Does the Pope really Have Now?](#)" *Newsweek*, April 25, 2025.

Roundtable Contribution (200 words), "Go Micro" in "Where Do We Go From Here? *Manifestos from the Eponymously Titled Panel Hosted by 'The Contextualizing the Catholic Abuse Crisis Seminar,'* American Academy of Religion, 2023, in *Religion*, Forthcoming 2025.

Blog Post, [Managing the Sexual Revolution, Catholic Style: Towards an Intellectual History](#), *The Journal of the History of Ideas Blog*, May 22, 2024.

Book Interview, [Understanding Conscience](#), *The Upper House Podcast*, August 8, 2022.

Book Interview, "[Follow Your Conscience.](#)" *New Books Network: Catholic Studies*, September 27, 2021.

Interview, [“Biden Could Be Our Second Catholic President, Does it Matter?”](#) *New York Times*, September 23, 2021.

Interview, [“‘Outing’ of priest shines light on power – and partisanship – of Catholic Media,”](#) *The Conversation*, July 30, 2021.

Book Interview, [“Follow Your Conscience,”](#) *Righting America: A Forum for Scholarly Conversation about Christianity, Culture, and Politics in the US*, July 1, 2021.

Interview, [“Catholic Church debate on Eucharist underscores tension between Vatican, Conservative Bishops,”](#) *Just the News* June 21, 2021.

Interview, [“We Don’t Understand Religious Freedom. COVID-19 Proved it.”](#) *US Catholic*, June 8, 2021.

Book Interview/Launch. [“Follow Your Conscience,”](#) The Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism, March 13, 2021.

[“The Good Catholic,”](#) *Religion and Politics*, January 19, 2021.

Interview, [“What Francis’s Comments About Gay People Could Mean for LGBTQ People Worldwide,”](#) *The Washington Post*, October 21, 2020.

[“Father Pelton Built Links Between Latin America and US Church,”](#) *The National Catholic Reporter*, December 7, 2019.

[“Conversations and Conversions: The Bob Pelton Interviews,”](#) *American Catholic Studies*, 45 (Spring 2018): 7-13.

PRESENTATIONS

INVITED

“Follow Your Conscience: Catholic Lessons from the Vietnam War for Today” 2026
Holy Cross Parish
Invited Lecture

“Chat GPT and the Vietnam War” 2024
Catholic University of Croatia
“How LLMs Modulate Our Memory and its Ethical Implications”
Invited Panel Presenter

“A Wolf in the Chicken Coop”: Louis Miller and the Survivors of Louisville” 2024
University of North Carolina Charlotte
Henry Luce, Religion and Sex Abuse Project

Invited Seminar Presentation

- “‘A Wolf in the Chicken Coop’’: Louis Miller and the Survivors of Louisville” 2024
University of Virginia, Catholic Studies
Invited Lecture and Manuscript Workshop
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church and the Spirit of the Sixties” 2022
University of Venice, Seminar in the History of Christianity
Book Lecture
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church and the Spirit of the Sixties” 2022
The American Catholic Historical Society, Philadelphia, PA
Book Lecture
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church and the Spirit of the Sixties” 2022
Duquesne University, Department of History and Catholic Studies
Book Lecture
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church, War, Sex, and the Sixties “ 2021
Springfield College, Philosophy and Religion Spring Forum
Book Lecture
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Roots of America’s Rights Revolution” 2020
University of Virginia, Colloquium in American Religions
Book Presentation and Discussion
- “Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Roots of America’s Rights Revolution” 2018
Catholic University of America, School of Theology and Religious Studies
Public Lecture
- “Conscience in the Catholic Imagination: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives” 2017
Holy Family Parish. Stow, Ohio, 2017
Public Lecture
- “Conscience: The Catholic Idea that Transformed Modern America” 2016
University of Dayton, History Department
Public Lecture

INVITED, NOTRE DAME

- “Rockin’ 250: Reflections on 1776” 2026
Student Union Board, Panel Presenter
- “Richard Sipe: How to be an Expert on Catholic Sexuality”
Ansari Institute, *Faith in the Story Conference* 2023

- “Dissent and Discipline in Modern American Catholicism”
Special Edition: *American Studies Colloquium* 2022
- “From Good Priest to Abuser: Father Louis Miller and Clergy Abuse”
Cushwa Center Research Symposium: *Gender, Sex, and Power* 2022

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- “Confronting Sexual Modernity: Catholics and Solitary Sex” 2026
Plenary: Blurred Lines, American Catholic Historical Association
- “Father Louis Miller, Archbishop Thomas McDonough, and the Country Strategy” 2026
American Catholic Historical Association
- “Directing Undergraduate Studies in an American Studies Program” 2025
American Studies Association
- “The Intellectual History of a Catholic Psychiatric Ward” 2025
Society of US Intellectual History
- “Nuns and the Rise of Catholic Psychiatry, 1945-1965” 2025
Conference on the History of Women Religious
- “Father Louis Miller, Survivors, Camp Tall Trees and the History of Clergy Abuse”
50th Anniversary Conference, Cushwa Center 2025
- “Beyond Sin: Catholic Intellectuals, the Social Sciences, and Sex,” 2025
Organization of American Historians
- “The Rise of Catholic Sexology” 2024
American Catholic Historical Association
- “Catholic History is a History of Sexuality: Centering the Clergy Abuse Crisis” 2023
American Academy of Religions
- “American Studies at the University of Notre Dame: Challenges and Opportunities” 2023
American Studies Association
- “Richard Sipe and the Study of Modern Catholic Sexuality” 2023
American Catholic Historical Association
- “The Corporeal Turn in American Thought: 1980 to 2000” 2021
The Society of United States Intellectual History
- “Inside the Mind of Reverend Louis Miller” 2020
The Society of United States Intellectual History
- “Formation of Christian Soldiers for the Vietnam War” 2020
The American Historical Association, Chicago
- “Conscience: A Global Catholic Movement for Medieval and Modern Rights” 2019
Global History and Catholicism, Cushwa Center
- “Catholic Conscience Language in the Secular Human Rights Revolution, 1970-1985” 2018
The Conference of Faith and History, Calvin College
- “Speaking Catholic: Liberal Protestants Adopt the Catholic Theology of Conscience” 2016
The Boston College Biennial Conference on the History of Religion
- “Conscience: The Rise of a Moral and Political Category” 2015
The United States Intellectual History Annual Conference
- “Catholic Conscience Claims in War, 1940-1957” 2015
The New England Historical Association
- “Consistently Askew: The Theologies of John Ford, S.J., 1944-1968”

Crossings and Dwellings, Loyola University,	2014
“Set Apart and a Setting Apart: Conscience in World War II America, 1939-1945”	
Intellectual Hinterlands,	2014
“American Consumer Culture and Catholic Devotion at Holy Hill Shrine, 1880-1960”	
Harvard Conference on the History of American Capitalism,	2010
“Riding with St. Paul in the Passenger Side and the Creation of Consumer Sites: The	
Archdiocese of Milwaukee Enters the Automobile Age, 1920-1965”	
Symposium on Faith and Culture, Secularization and Revival, Baylor	2010

ROUNDTABLE PARTICIPATION

“A Catholic in the White House: The Biden Presidency in Historical Context,”	
Cushwa Center for the Study of American Catholicism	2021
“Catholicism, Public Scholarship, and the 2020 Election”	
American Catholic Historical Association, Webinar	2020
“Associations and Catholic Modernity”	
American Catholic Historical Association	2019

PANELS ORGANIZED

“Nuns and Modern American Intellectual Life”	
Conference of the History of Women Religious	2025
“The Clergy Abuse Crisis: Land, Space and Place”	2025
“Catholicism and Liberalism: Race, the Social Sciences, Sex, Immigration, and Sex”	2025
“New Directions in Catholic Intellectual History”	
American Catholic Historical Association	2024
“American Catholics, Sex Abuse, the Body, and Modern Sexualities”	
American Catholic Historical Association	2023
“Conscience Politics in the Twentieth-Century United States”	
The Organization of American Historians (OAH) (accepted/canceled COVID)	2020

DISCUSSANT

“Catholicism and the Formation of Conscience”	
The American Academy of Religions (online)	2020
“Catechetics, Schools, and the Color Divide”	
The American Catholic Historical Association, Chicago	2019

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

UNDERGRADUATE: INSTRUCTOR OF RECORD

University of Notre Dame

Winter 2026

Introduction to American Studies	2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, 2026
America's Culture Wars	Summer Online 2026, 2025, 2021
The Vietnam War and American Catholics	2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022
	Summer Online 2023, 2023
	Summer Online 2024, 2024
	Summer Online 2025
Witnessing the Sixties	2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2026
	Special Covid Online Semester 2021
Civil Rights in America	2020, 2021, 2022
The Ideas That Made America	2019, 2020, 2023, 2024
American Microstudies (Senior Seminar)	2025
American Microstudies (University Seminar)	2025

Boston College

Religion in America Since 1945	2015
Religion in the Twentieth-Century US	2016
Modern History I	2016

SENIOR THESIS SUPERVISION

Eva Williams	2025-2026
Tess Reinhart	2025-2026
Charlie Morris	2025-2026
Joey Kostiske	2024-2025
Emma Nunez	2024-2025
Sam Coffman	2024-2025
Ryan Sullivan	2024-2025
Dane Sherman	2023-2024
Kyle Gallegos	2023-2024
Mannion McGinley	2022-2023
Lucy Adams	2022-2023
Hailey Oppenlander	2020-2021
Katherine Machado	2020-2021
Julianne Downing	2020-2021
Lily Strailey	2020-2021
Caroline Kelly	2020-2021
John Draves	2019-2020
Caroline Freeman	2019-2020
Theresa Azemar	2019-2020

TEACHING ASSISTANTSHIPS

Boston College

American History to 1865	2014
American History since 1865	2015
Democracy Rights and Empire I	2012
Democracy Rights and Empire II	2013

Europe and the World I	2011
Europe and the World II	2012
Marquette University	
Western Civilization I	2009
Western Civilization II	2010

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS AND SERVICE

SERVICE

Catholic Church

Historical Commissioner, Brother Columba Cause Historical Commission 2025-

Discipline

Member, Committee on Departments, Programs and Centers 2026-
 American Studies Association
 Co-Director, Boston College Writing Fellows 2025-
 Member of the John Tracy Ellis Dissertation Award Committee 2024-
 Chair of Membership Committee, American Catholic Historical Association 2020- 2024
 Executive Council Member, American Catholic Historical Association 2019-2020

Peer Reviewer: *University of Chicago Press, Cambridge University Press, Fordham University Press, American Catholic Studies, US Catholic Historian, Cornell University Press, Oxford University Press, Theology & Sexuality, Journal of Global Catholicism, The Journal of Church & State, Jesuit Educational Quarterly, Open Theology.*

Notre Dame

Director of Undergraduate Studies 2020-
 Member, Gender Studies Steering Committee 2025-
 Affiliate Faculty, Gender Studies 2025-
 Fellow, Ansari Institute 2023-
 Fellow, Klau Institute 2023-2026
 Member, College Council 2024-2025
 Faculty Mentor, Bridge Program 2023, 2024, 2025
 Faculty Advisor, *Americana* 2020-
 Faculty Advisor, American Studies Club 2020-
 Advisory Board, Sports Media and American Culture Minor 2021-
 Planning Committee, Ansari, Faith in the Story 2020-2022
 Director, "Gender, Sex, and Power," Cushwa Center 2020-2022
 Faculty Participant, Center for Social Concern Spring Break Trip 2020, 2022
 Coordinator, American Studies Colloquium 2019-2020
 Search Committee, Gallivan Director 2020-
 Chair, Undergraduate Awards Committee 2020-
 Committee, Cushwa Center, Global Catholic History Conference 2018-2019

AFFILIATIONS

American Academy of Religious	2023-
American Studies Association	2023-
Organization of American Historians	2019-
American Historical Association	2019-
Society of US Intellectual Historians	2016-
American Catholic Historical Association	2010-