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Distinguished Professors

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The University of Dayton has attracted two distinguished scholars of religious studies to its faculty, strengthening its position as a national leader in the study of U.S. Catholicism.

Both David J. O'Brien and Vincent J. Miller have explored how Catholicism has shaped U.S. culture and how, in turn, U.S. culture has contributed to the distinct character of U.S. Catholicism, according to Sandra Yocum, chair of the University's religious studies department.

"Our religious studies faculty are already doing some new and interesting theological work in conversation with the Catholic intellectual tradition and within the contemporary context," said Yocum. "We are very excited that these distinguished professors will be joining us to add their voices and expertise to our work here as well as the national conversation about U.S. Catholicism."

Paul Benson, dean of the University's College of Arts and Sciences said, "These additions to our faculty will make the University of Dayton a major national center for research that explores the intersections of Catholicism and American culture."

O'Brien is professor emeritus of history and formerly the Loyola Professor of Roman Catholic Studies at the College of the Holy Cross in Massachusetts. O'Brien specializes in Catholic social and political thought, the history of American Catholicism, and religion and politics. He frequently provides expert commentary for the media. He has written six books on the history of American Catholicism and has served as President of the American Catholic Historical Association. O'Brien was awarded the University of Dayton's Marianist Award for Distinguished Service to Catholic Intellectual Life in 2006. He has been appointed as University Professor of Faith and Culture.

"David O'Brien has done some amazing and significant work in thinking about Catholicism in the U.S., how it engages in the wider community and the public face of Catholicism," Yocum said. "His work has been very influential in exploring the long history of public Catholicism and the how it differs among groups such as immigrants and those of various political viewpoints."

O'Brien said: "The University of Dayton pays close attention to the American dimensions of the American Catholic experience. This is crucial for the American church and for Catholic higher education. I hope I can help support this remarkable work."

Miller is currently associate professor of theology at Georgetown University and served as a distinguished visiting professor at the University of Dayton in spring 2008. He is author of *Consuming Religion: Christian Faith and Practice in a Consumer Culture* (New York: Continuum, 2003) and is currently working on a book about how globalization is affecting religious belief and communities. He has been appointed as the first Gudorf Chair in Catholic Theology and Culture.

"Vince Miller is one of the most interesting young theologians currently working in the U.S.," Yocum said. "He has an international reputation on how consumerism and globalization are affecting religion. We're pleased that he'll be working with our doctoral students and teaching some undergraduate courses."

Miller said: "I'm thrilled to be joining the University of Dayton, which has done so much to sustain the conversation of the Catholic intellectual tradition in the U.S. I look forward to working in a department where theology is undertaken in dialogue with the study of the history and culture of American Catholicism."

The University of Dayton's graduate religious studies program this year includes 34 doctoral students and about 75 master's students, Yocum said. Its focus is the U.S. Catholic experience.

The U.S. Catholic Collection held by the University's library supports the religious studies program and will celebrate its 10th anniversary May 20.

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