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### Catholic Scholar Available to Discuss the Legacy of Vatican II 50 Years Later

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*UNH Media Relations*

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## Media Relations

October 2, 2012

### Catholic Scholar Available to Discuss the Legacy of Vatican II 50 Years Later



DURHAM, N.H. – Michele Dillon, a scholar of Catholicism and professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire, is available to discuss the legacy of Vatican II, which took place from October 1962 to December 1965 and resulted in sweeping changes

in the Roman Catholic Church.

“It is hard to exaggerate the transformative impact of Vatican II on the Catholic Church. Pope John XXIII’s opening speech to the Second Vatican Council was full of optimism that the council would bring the church ‘up to date’ and make it confident and relevant in the modern world. The bishops and assisting theologians at the council openly discussed a wide range of issues and developed a more dynamic understanding of the church’s own institutional identity as well as of what it means to be Catholic,” Dillon says.

“Vatican II’s deliberations and decisions were highly welcome to American Catholics. In particular, Vatican II’s declarations on religious freedom, personal conscience, lay expertise and doctrinal interpretive competence, and the laity’s obligations to be active participants in the life of the church and as citizens in the larger society made a huge and enduring impact,” she says.

“Vatican II’s inclusive understanding of the church as the ‘People of God’ was especially inviting and, along with changes in the format of the Mass – the priest no longer had his back to, but faced, the congregation, and the shift from Latin to the vernacular or English – gave a new and energized sense of church involvement and commitment to Catholics that continues to reverberate soundly today,” Dillon says.

Dillon has written extensively on Catholicism in the United States and elsewhere, and has been especially interested in the institutional and cultural processes that enable Catholics who selectively disagree with aspects of Catholic teaching to remain loyal to Catholicism. She also has examined the political engagement of the Catholic Church, and of other churches and activist organizations, in public moral debates in different western countries. She is the author of “Catholic Identity: Balancing Reason, Faith, and Power” and the forthcoming book “American Catholics in a Changing Church.”

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#### PHOTO

Michele Dillon, a scholar of Catholicism and professor of sociology at the University of New Hampshire.

<http://www.unh.edu/news/img/liberalarts/micheledillon.jpg>.

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*EDITORS AND REPORTERS: Prof. Michele Dillon can be reached at 781-239-3552 and [michele.dillon@unh.edu](mailto:michele.dillon@unh.edu). For broadcasters, UNH Media Relations has an in-house ReadyCam broadcast studio available through VideoLink (617-340-4300) and an ISDN line.*

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