

RELIGION AND WORLD AFFAIRS VIRTUAL COURSE MODULES

# VATICAN DIPLOMACY: NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT



## MODULE OVERVIEW

This guide is part of the Berkley Center's [Religion and World Affairs Virtual Course Modules](#), a collection of curricular modules that draws on open-access articles and multimedia sources to support online learning in higher education.

**This curricular module explores the evolving Vatican position on nuclear disarmament, highlighting how the Catholic Church plays a unique role in international relations. Rev. Drew Christiansen, S.J., considers the future of Catholic action on nuclear disarmament in a 2019 article on [“Time for the Abolition of Nuclear Arms”](#) [PDF]. Christiansen organized a daylong workshop on [“The Pope and the Bomb: Beyond Deterrence”](#) [videos] in 2020, which examined the moral and pastoral implications of the Church position on nuclear disarmament, as well as other timely themes in nuclear geopolitics.**

## KEY THEMES

Below, you can explore more resources on Vatican diplomacy and nuclear disarmament, with additional materials on Pope Francis and the call for nuclear disarmament. These materials are designed to engage students with the following issues:

- the Church’s teaching on nuclear disarmament and its pastoral and moral implications [[2019 Christiansen article](#), PDF; [2018 Christiansen article](#), PDF]
- Pope Francis’ rejection of nuclear deterrence and moral and policy approaches to disarmament [[“Pope Francis’ Vision of Peace,”](#) video; [“The Pope and the Bomb: Beyond Deterrence,”](#) videos]

Instructors are encouraged to look through topics below [videos/PDFs/articles] and adapt these questions to their needs.

## NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND THE CHURCH

[“Time for the Abolition of Nuclear Arms,”](#) Drew Christiansen, (2019) [PDF]

What roles do the Church and lay groups play in debates on nuclear arms, disarmament, and abolition? Discuss the core principles of the Church’s teaching on nuclear issues.

What are the implications of Russia’s rearmament program for these roles of the Church, particularly in relation to the United States?

[“The Church Says ‘No’ to Nuclear Weapons: Pastoral and Moral Implications,”](#) Drew Christiansen, *La Civiltà Cattolica* (2018) [PDF]

Discuss the U.S. Bishops’ 1983 The Challenge of Peace letter and the Oakland dialogues. What lessons can we draw from this example of Church engagement with moral discourses on nuclear weapons?

Discuss the eight responsibilities of just war analysts, both within and outside of the Church, as the author proposes.

## POPE FRANCIS ON NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

[“Pope Francis’ Vision of Peace,”](#) (2020) [video]

Discuss the three elements of the Holy See’s rejection of nuclear deterrence.

What circumstances of the modern age informed the Holy See’s shift from acceptance to rejection of nuclear deterrence? What short- and long-term goals has the Holy See identified to this end? [see 23:53-54:57]

[“How We Got Here,”](#) [video] from [“The Pope and the Bomb”](#) conference (2020)

Discuss the five levels of Pope Francis’ paradigm of integral ecology. How is this paradigm linked to moral ecology and a just peace framework, and how can these models inform the Church’s response to nuclear deterrence? [see 19:51-35:03]

How are U.S. and Russian policies developing “on four parallel alarming tracks,” and what do these developments mean for the future? Discuss the significance of the New Start Treaty and the speaker’s proposed three-step policy objective. [see 35:15-47:50]

[“Status Report: Arms Control and Non-Proliferation,”](#) [video] from [“The Pope and the Bomb”](#) conference (2020)

What is the continuing importance of managing nuclear risk, and what might deterrence look like going forward? How do we navigate “a new reality” of nuclear arms and deterrence? [see 9:43-25:08]

What are the implications of U.S.-Russia relations in the context of nuclear arms possession and deterrence? [see 25:20-41:28]

[“Ethics and Pastoral Guidance,”](#) [video] from [“The Pope and the Bomb”](#) conference (2020)

Discuss Article VI on disarmament in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1968. What are the implications of ambiguous language? [see 1:09-17:37]

What roles do pastors, bishops, chaplains, teachers, and other figures play in accompaniment and spiritual discernment on nuclear disarmament? [see 28:07-44:26]

Discuss the criteria of just peace principles as they apply to nuclear weapons in the contemporary age. [see 45:31-63:11]

What “ethics gaps” exist in the Church’s call for nuclear disarmament as a moral imperative? [see 63:44-79:45]

[“Conscience Formation and Public Education,”](#) [video] from [“The Pope and the Bomb”](#) conference (2020)

Discuss the formation of conscience on nuclear weapons as informed by the Church’s teaching. [see 10:02-30:32]

[“Approaches to Nuclear Disarmament,”](#) [video] from [“The Pope and the Bomb”](#) conference (2020)

How can Pope Francis’ call for nuclear disarmament help to provide “clarity of moral compass” regarding current nuclear arms and deterrence policies? [see 24:50-41:55]