TH220/TH505: Foundations of Moral Theology
Syllabus
S2:2012

DATE: July 16 – July 20, 2012

COURSE DESCRIPTION

For more information on this course, including the official course description and any prerequisites, can be found in the GPS Catalog at http://www.sjcme.edu/gpscatalog/

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to do the following:

Describe what faith and reason reveal about the nature of human personhood, especially man as created in the image of God, as bodily and spiritual, and as social.

1. Explain how Christian moral teaching responds to the basic human question, “How does one attain happiness?”
2. In the light of metaphysical and moral realism, analyze the prevailing ideology of moral relativism, tracing its sources in medieval nominalism and describing how it distorts human freedom.
3. Explain how baptismal insertion into new life in the Spirit of Jesus Christ transforms one interiorly, in terms of both the natural law and the New Law of grace.
4. Discuss how the virtues perfect the powers of the human soul, enabling the spontaneous embrace of the goods concretely indicated by the Ten Commandments.
5. Apply moral reasoning to analyze the fate of love and sexuality in a culture of death, showing the intrinsic connection between moral theology and Catholic social doctrine.

REQUIRED TEXT(s)


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**If you have any questions regarding your course materials, please contact your academic advisor and/or our book vendor EdMap. You can reach EdMap by phone 1- (800)-274-9104 or website at [http://www.edmapbookstore.com/storefront/index/STJSP](http://www.edmapbookstore.com/storefront/index/STJSP)**

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**COURSE INTRODUCTION**

Catholic moral teaching is about the happiness—the undying, unimaginably beautiful happiness—God the Father has desired for every single human being from before the foundation of the world.

Yet Catholic teaching on morality continues to be caricatured as life-denying, rigoristic, body-hating, woman-hating, etc. Sometimes a mistaken understanding of Catholic morality on the part of Catholics themselves has fed this stereotype. To advance the urgently necessary task of the new evangelization of the modern world, all Catholics must appropriate the richness and beauty of Catholic moral teaching, so as to be able to communicate the Father’s plan of loving goodness to a world so desperately in need of hope. For this high task, you have come to this course.

Saint Augustine observed that God has made us for Himself and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him. It is this restlessness of the human heart as it is expressed in free human action that is the subject matter of moral theology. God the Father has created each and every single human individual out of sheer love, and He wants us each to come to Him freely, out of love. In and through the goods of this world that we embrace and that authentically fulfill our *nature*, God presents His very inner life as our ultimate, supernatural, fulfillment. He consummate happiness of the Trinitarian life of love of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is to be our happiness—if we will freely receive such a gracious elevation of our nature.

What we are studying in moral theology is human freedom in the context of the infinite reality of Love: God’s boundless love for each of us. That is, we will be gaining an understanding of our everyday actions as illuminated by God’s wise plan for the happiness of each and every human being. No subject of study is more beautiful. This is the very substance of our lives, caught up in an exquisite plan of infinite love.
COURSE FORMAT
This course will involve intensive reading, as well as some writing.

Given the compressed nature of the course, it is necessary to give you a not insignificant **pre-residency assignment**: you are expected to have read everything listed for the two Day 1 class periods (*Men and Women are from Eden* (complete), pp. 3-38 of *Living the Truth in Love*, pp. 1-62 of *Morality*, as well as the listed Scripture readings. It is also strongly suggested that you read through *Morality* as a whole before coming to campus, which would give you helpful breathing room to keep up with the reading assignments through the week.

Along with this reading, you are required to bring to class on the first day a paragraph reflection on each of these readings. For the Scripture, you are to choose one of the passages, so that you will be bringing four paragraphs total to class on the first day. You will be writing such paragraphs throughout the week. The point is, *in short compass*, to attempt to get at the heart of the reading. This is an impossible task, but useful in its futility. Students will be randomly chosen to read out their paragraphs throughout the week.

In addition to these exercises, students will be asked to write a **post-residency paper** based on a book to be read after the session ends (see below).

COURSE GUIDELINES

Of course, attendance is mandatory. You will be responsible for the daily readings, daily paragraphs, as well as for class participation.

Any significant issues that might impact the completion of assignments or your attendance should be brought promptly to the instructor. Requests for incompletes must go to your advisor.

**Rubric**

The following four criteria are used in grading your essays. You may find them a helpful way to critique, and then improve, your papers.

1. **Content**
   A: Clear, sharp line of argument that displays a degree of insight into the topic, *and would be intelligible to a normal thoughtful person* (pretend you are writing not for me but for an intelligent first cousin or uncle).
   B: Competent argumentation.
   C: Not really a careful argument, but more a recitation of facts or a repetition of the class material. May have some fallacious arguments, but should still be reasonable.
   D/F: No developed arguments--or egregiously fallacious ones.
2. **Organization**
   A: Clear organization guided by a good thesis statement (perhaps underlined), with natural flow of arguments, good smooth transitions, and some attention paid to effective opening and closing.
   B: Competent form, but may be either a little too mechanical or a little too loose, though not really disorganized. Perhaps somewhat abrupt at beginning or end.
   C: May exhibit one or the other of two opposing faults: either a structure so rigid that the essay reads more like an outline than an essay, or a noticeable tendency to ramble. No real effort to make the essay flow from beginning to end.
   D/F: Essentially disorganized.

3. **Style**
   A: Well written, free of significant errors, and pleasant to read. Has been proofread with care, beyond “spell-check.”
   B: Competently written, with relatively few errors, and not unpleasant to read. No more than 3 to 5 proofreading errors.
   C: Readable, but flawed by some significant stylistic errors. Not proofread.
   D/F: Hard to read, vitiated by serious errors, all but incoherent. Not proofread.

4. **Texts**
   A: i) Generous quantity of texts, ii) well-integrated into the paper (so as not to read like a string of texts), and iii) proper style in footnotes or MLA parenthetical citations, iv) with bibliography
   B: Lacking in one to two of the above 4 items.
   C: Lacking in two to three of the above 4 items.
   D: Very sparse use of texts.
   F: No texts used.

**Your final paper grade is calculated as follows:**

A: an A in each area, with allowance for a B in one area other than content.
B: a B or better in all areas, with allowance for a C in one area other than content.
C: a C in all areas, with allowance for a D in one area other than content.
D/F: Failure to meet the criteria above.

**The following symbols are used in grading your paper:**

**NAS** = not a sentence. It could be a run-on or a fragment. Learn what these are and avoid them!
**R-P** = re-phrase. The phrasing may be clumsy or uneven, and may affect the content.
**PR!** = proofread! 3-5 minor PR errors allowed before you are in “C” territory for “Style.”
**Org?** = organization is missing
**Arrow** = some problem, in grammar or content. If there is not a comment, that is an invitation to you to try to figure out the problem. Should the problem remain unclear to you, please check with me.
I = Insight. Can make up for weaknesses elsewhere.  
T? = unclear transition, or no transition, either from one paragraph to another or from one sentence to another.  
Adrift = a thought, a sentence, a paragraph, that may well contain a fine idea, but is not properly placed within the organizational structure of the paper.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Class Period 1—Day 1  
Topic: The Theology of the Body  
Required Readings: Men and Women are from Eden (complete)  
Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on what constitutes the heart of the theology of the body.

Class Period 2—Day 1  
Topic: Scriptural Vitality, and a History of Moral Theology  
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 3-38; Morality, pp. 1-62; Matthew 5-7, 22:34-40; 25:14-46; Romans 1-2, 12-15; I John; I Peter  
Assignments: Write one-paragraph reflections on each of the three sources—Ashley, Pinckaers, and Scripture (choosing one of the Scripture passages to stand for all the Scripture readings)—making clear how in each case the centrality of Scripture for a living moral theology is indicated.

Class Period 3—Day 2  
Topic: A Renewed Moral Teaching  
Required Readings: Morality, pp. 65-113  
Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on the characteristics of a moral theology renewed according to Vatican II’s guidelines.

Class Period 4—Day 2  
Topic: The Father’s Loving Plan for Our Happiness  
Required Readings: Catechism, nos. 1691-2141; Veritatis splendor, nos. 1-27  
Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on the reading from Veritatis splendor, succinctly indicating how Blessed John Paul approaches moral theology.

Class Period 5—Day 3  
Topic: Living by Faith and Moral Realism  
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 41-87; Veritatis splendor, nos. 28-83
Assignments: Write one-paragraph reflections on each of the two readings. For the Ashley reading: what does it mean to live by faith? For Veritatis: what is the basis for moral realism?

Class Period 6—Day 3
Topic: Living Wisely: Ordering All Things According to the Loving Will of the Father
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 88-147

Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on what it means to live wisely.

Class Period 7—Day 4
Topic: Hope and the Cross: The Font of Christian Creativity
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 151-175; Veritatis splendor, nos. 84-108, 117-120

Assignments: Write one-paragraph reflections on each of the two readings. For the Ashley reading: what does it mean to live in hope? For Veritatis: why does Blessed John Paul introduce a discussion of martyrdom?

Class Period 8—Day 4
Topic: The Sanctification of Desire
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp.177-268

Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on how transformation in Christ suffuses even our sense appetites.

Class Period 9—Day 5
Topic: Living Out the Justification of Christ
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 271-348

Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on the nature of justice.

Class Period 10—Day 5
Topic: Justice Embraced by the Ultimate Horizon: Love
Required Readings: Living the Truth in Love, pp. 380-462

Assignments: Write a one-paragraph reflection on how love goes beyond, without destroying, justice.

POST-RESIDENCY ASSIGNMENT
Read Life Issues, Medical Choices, and write a 10-page term paper (7 pages for undergraduates) that applies the wisdom of moral realism to two of the topics discussed in the book (not from the same chapter).
Please consult with the instructor on a topic and bibliography by July 20th.
COURSE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Current information regarding College policies affecting your course can be found on the Resources/Policy section of the course homepage. On this page, you will find vital information, including the following:

- Current Student Handbook, outlining course-specific policies
- Access to support resources, including advising and online tutorial services
- Student Success Guides

SUBMITTING ASSIGNMENTS

Your instructor will provide you with instructions on how to submit your assignments while on campus. Any other submissions, including your post-residency assignment should be submitted through the Assignment Submission Form on your ANGEL course site.

EVALUATION

- Classroom Participation .................................................................60%
- Post-Residency Requirement..........................................................40%

INSTRUCTOR INTRODUCTION

Passionate as I am about all things theological and about moral theology in particular, I am excited to serve as your guide to this beautiful aspect of the faith. I am a member of the full-time faculty of Saint John’s Seminary in Boston, a professor of systematic and moral theology, and I serve as the Vice President for Mission of the Seminary’s Theological Institute for the New Evangelization (TINE), which offers degree and non-degree programs for the formation of the laity.

I have been around:: born in Taiwan and raised a Baptist in Arkansas. Almost fifteen years ago in Washington, D.C., two wondrous things happened to me: I was received into the Catholic Church, and I married the love of my life.

My Ph.D. is from Boston College, and my scholarly interests include integrating the theology of Hans Urs von Balthasar with the achievement of Saint Thomas Aquinas, as well as showing the centrality of the family and the right to life for social justice. My theological passion is not just academic. Being serious about the preferential option for the poor, I have long been active in the pro-life movement. I have the privilege of serving as Chairman of the Board for Massachusetts Citizens for Life, the Commonwealth’s flagship grassroots pro-life organization.
As much as I love being a theologian, nothing holds a candle to being the father of Caterina, John-Paul, Thérèse, Benedict, and Maximilian. We live in Boston.

**HOW DO I ACCESS DISABILITIES SERVICES?**

Anyone who would like information or needs access to accommodations or services related to disabilities should contact the college’s Accommodations Office. Please contact your Academic Advisor or refer to the [Student Handbook](#) for more information.

This course was developed by **Saint Joseph’s College of Maine** for the exclusive use of students enrolled in the College’s Division of Graduate and Professional Studies.

For more information on this course, including the official course description and any prerequisites, can be found in the GPS Catalog at [http://www.sjcme.edu/gpscatalog/](http://www.sjcme.edu/gpscatalog/)

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