

# **Fundamental Moral Theology**

**CE 2056**

**Fall, 2006**

**Monday-Thursday 9:40-11 a.m.**

**CDSP 113**

**Instructor:**

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JSTB

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**Catalogue Description:**

This course explores fundamental concepts of Roman Catholic moral theology, including: moral anthropology; the use of Scripture in morals; the nature and function of moral norms; conscience and its formation; natural law; fundamental option and sin; virtue and the telos of human life, and modes of moral reasoning. Moral theology is fundamentally a discipline of practical reasoning: these concepts will be addressed in the context of concrete cases and issues as well as at the abstract and theoretical level. Format is lecture/discussion, and student evaluation will be based on mid-term and final short-answer and essay examination, with the option of writing a research paper in place of the final exam. This course meets the requirements of a foundational course in the JSTB M.Div. curriculum.

**Course Objectives:**

1. To construct a theological framework for moral decision-making in the Roman Catholic tradition.
2. To employ this framework to address particular cases and issues of importance today.
3. To bring this construction into dialogue with other forms of moral reasoning that influence moral debate in the Church and society.

**Learning Objectives:**

1. To gain an understanding of the salient features of Roman Catholic moral theology, with a special emphasis on the Thomistic virtue tradition.
2. To demonstrate an ability to articulate a thoughtful stance in response to pastorally-relevant case studies.
3. To recognize and to be able to assess the strengths and weaknesses of various modes of moral reasoning.

**Texts:**

--Spohn, William C. *Go and Do Likewise. Jesus and Ethics*. New York: Continuum, 2000

--Mahoney, John, SJ. *The Making of Moral Theology. A Study of the Roman Catholic Tradition*. Oxford: Clarendon Paperbacks, Oxford Univ. Press, Oxford, 1987.

--Reader/Reserve readings available at Copy Central

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**Structure:**

This course comprises three sections. For most of the semester, we'll assemble the building blocks of a distinctively Roman Catholic approach to moral questions. We will explore such topics such as moral anthropology, imagination, the role of conscience, human freedom, and sin, and the Catholic social tradition. Christian morality is not a scatter-shot set of rules (like "Don't eat meat on Friday during Lent,") nor is it merely a random set of philosophically interesting concepts. Rather, Christian morality consists in a life lived in response to the encounter with God in Christ. Our lives are the answer to the question Jesus asks his disciples: "Who do you say that I am?" Moral theology aims to unpack the deeper structure of an intellectually coherent response to that question. These building blocks are important primarily because they inform Christian living. Part of our task in this course will be to consider the practical implications for life and ministry of the concepts we explore here.

Then, we will examine various modes of moral reasoning that inform contemporary moral discourse. We live in an era of tremendous diversity in ethical thought--some of our most contentious public debates are divisive in part because different moral frameworks undergird the arguments on either side. We'll examine some of the salient forms of moral reasoning, with their strengths and weaknesses.

Finally, the class will select two topics for specific attention. Moral theology is a discipline of practical reasoning, not abstraction: the structure of morals we build should be useful in approaching specific questions.

This course is rooted in Roman Catholic moral tradition: readings and (especially) lectures will reflect also an emphasis on virtue or character-based ethics. However, it is a basic conviction of Catholic moral tradition (based in a doctrine of natural law, or, analogously, on Paul's concept of a law written on the heart,) that Catholic morals should be intelligible not only to Catholics but to any thinking person of good will. Accordingly, in this class, it is not expected that all will share the Catholic or Christian faith. This is a classroom, not catechesis; no particular profession of faith is needed here. What you need here are an inquiring mind, willingness to consider various positions on moral questions, and willingness to challenge what seems unreasonable. There are no questions that are

off-limits in this class. Respectful dialogue is expected: let's inquire together. Like the prophets said:

"[L]earn to do good; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow. Come now, let us argue it out, says the Lord." (Is. 1:17-18a, NRSV)

"For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. The one who thus serves Christ is acceptable to God and has human approval. Let us then pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding." (Rom. 15:17-19, NRSV)

### **Requirements:**

Students should come to class prepared to discuss the day's assigned readings. Fair warning: the reading is substantial. Don't hesitate to read ahead, and give yourself time to ponder the material at hand. All students--auditors as well as those taking the class for credit--are expected to participate in class discussion.

There will be three exams: two take-home preliminary exams and a take-home final exam. The topics we discuss will build on what has gone before. Therefore, the second preliminary exam and the final are cumulative, but will emphasize new material.

In lieu of the final exam, students may opt to write a research paper of 12-15 pages. M.A. students in particular are urged to consider this option. Students wishing to write a term paper should discuss topics with me no later than the due date of the mid-term exam. Students wishing to take this course for advanced-level credit will take the final exam in addition to writing a term paper. Please pardon me for having to say this, but plagiarism on any assignment will result in failure for the entire course and disciplinary action at the discretion of the professor and the student's school.

Grading: Discussion/participation: 10%  
Preliminary exams: 40%  
Final exam/paper: 50%

### **Calendar (subject to change)**

#### **Sept. 7 Introduction**

#### **Sept. 11 Task of Moral Theology**

--Mahoney ch. 1

--Mark O'Keefe, "Ethics and Spirituality Past, Present and Future," in *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy.* Paulist Press, NY, 1995

--Spohn Ch. 1, 2

#### **Sept. 14 Sources, Scripture and Ethics**

- Margaret Farley, "Sources for Christian Sexual Ethics" in *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics*, New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Allen Verhey, "'Useful...for Training in Righteousness': Scripture, Churches, and the Moral Life" in *Remembering Jesus. Christian Community, Scripture and the Moral Life*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2002
- Tom Deidun, "The Bible and Christian Ethics" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction*. Bernard Hoose, ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998
- Revisit Spohn Ch. 1

### **Sept. 18 Theological Anthropology**

- Richard P. McBrien, "A Theology of Human Existence: Nature, Grace, Original Sin" in *Catholicism*. San Francisco: Harper, 1994
- "Man's Vocation. Life in the Spirit" in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994
- Joseph Selling, "The Human Person" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction*. Bernard Hoose, ed. Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998
- Richard Gula, "Being Human Before God" in *The Call to Holiness. Embracing a Fully Christian Life*. New York: Paulist Press, 2003

### **Sept. 21 Freedom and Fundamental Option**

- Kopfensteiner in Hoose
- Richard Gula, "Freedom and Knowledge." in *Reason Informed by Faith. Foundations of Catholic Morality*. Paulist Press, NY, 1989
- Mark O'Keefe, OSB, "Dynamism and Integration: Fundamental Option and the Three Ways." in *Becoming Good, Becoming Holy*. Paulist Press, NY, 1995

### **Sept. 25 Imagination, Perception and Experience**

- Spohn, Ch. 3, 4 and 5
- Stanley Hauerwas, "The Virtues and Our Communities: Human Nature as History," and "Character, Narrative and Growth in the Christian Life." in *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethic*. Univ. Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN, 1981

### **Sept. 28 Emotion**

- Spohn Ch. 6
- Sidney Callahan, "Definition and Origin of Emotions" in *In Good Conscience. Reason and Emotion in Moral Decision Making*. San Francisco: Harper, 1991
- Daniel C. Maguire, "The Feel of Truth" in *The Moral Choice*. New York: Doubleday, 1978
- Mary Midgley, "Biotechnology and Monstrosity. Why We Should Pay Attention to the 'Yuk Factor.'" *Hastings Center Report*, Sept./Oct. 2000, Vol. 30 Issue 5, p. 7-15.

### **Oct. 2 Moral Norms**

- Mahoney ch. 6

- Richard M. Gula, S.S., "Moral Norms" in *Reason Informed by Faith. Foundations of Catholic Morality*. New York: Paulist, 1989
- Charles Curran, "Absolute Moral Norms" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction*. Bernard Hoose, ed., Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998
- Josef Fuchs, "The Absoluteness of Behavioral Moral Norms." in "*Introduction to Christian Ethics. A Reader*". Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, eds. Paulist Press, NY, 1989.

**\*\*\*\*Preliminary Exam 1, covering material through Oct. 2 will be distributed.\*\*\*\***

### **Oct. 5 Natural Law**

- Mahoney ch. 3
- Gerard J. Hughes, "Natural Law" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction*. Bernard Hoose, ed., Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998
- Stephen J. Pope, "Natural Law and Christian Ethics" from *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics*. Robin Gill, ed. Cambridge Univ. Press, Cambridge, 2001
- Thomas Aquinas, O.P., *Summa Theologiae*, I IIae, q. 94
- Todd A. Salzman, "Introduction," and "Natural Law: The Basic Goods Theory and Revisionism" in *What Are They Saying About Catholic Ethical Method?* New York: Paulist Press, 2003
- Lisa Sowle Cahill, "Natural Law: A Feminist Reassessment." in *Is There a Human Nature?* Leroy S. Rouner, ed., University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, IN 1997

### **Oct. 9 Conscience 1**

- Mahoney ch. 5
- Bernard Häring, CSsR, "Conscience: The Sanctuary of Creative Fidelity and Liberty." from "*Introduction to Christian Ethics. A Reader*". Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, eds. New York: Paulist Press, 1989.
- Pope John Paul II. "Conscience and Truth," from *Veritatis Splendor*.

**\*\*\*\*Preliminary Exam 1 is due.\*\*\*\***

### **Oct. 12 Conscience 2**

- Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, I IIae, q. 19, Art. 5-6
- James Keenan, SJ, "Can A Wrong Action Be Good?: The Development of Theological Opinion on Erroneous Conscience" *Eglise e Theologie* No. 24, May 1993.
- William E. May "Conscience Formation and the Teaching of the Church." in *Introduction to Christian Ethics. A Reader*. Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, eds. Paulist Press, 1989

### **Oct. 16 Grace**

- Richard P. McBrien, "Nature and Grace" in *Catholicism*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994

--Roger Haight, S.J. selection from "Sin and Grace," in *Systematic Theology. Roman Catholic Perspectives. Vol. II.* Francis Schussler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin, eds., Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN, 1991

--Edward Collins Vacek, S.J., "Grace," "Love of God as Foundation of Moral Life," and "Friendship with God" in *Love, Human and Divine. The Heart of Christian Ethics.* Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1994

### **Oct. 19 Sin 1: Original Sin and Personal Sin**

--Richard Gula, "Kinds of Sin" in *Reason Informed by Faith. Foundations of Catholic Morality.* Paulist Press, NY, 1989

--"Original Sin" in *Catholicism.* Richard P. McBrien. San Francisco: Harper, 1994

--James F. Keenan, S.J., "Sin" in *Moral Wisdom. Lessons and Texts from the Catholic Tradition.* New York: Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2004

--Bruce Vawter, "Missing the Mark." in *The Mystery of Sin and Forgiveness.* Michael J. Taylor, SJ, ed. Alba House, Staten Island, NY, 1971

--Delores S. Williams, "A Womanist Perspective on Sin." in *A Troubling in My Soul. Womanist Perspectives on Evil and Suffering.* Emilie M. Townes, ed. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1993

### **Oct. 23-27: Reading Week. Enjoy!**

### **Oct. 30 Sin 2: Social Sin**

--Kenneth Himes, "Social Sin and the Role of the Individual." in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics.* Alan Anderson, ed. 1987

--Mark O'Keefe, OSB, "Social Sin and Fundamental Option." in *Christian Freedom. Essays by the Faculty of the Saint Meinrad School of Theology.* Clayton Jefford, ed. Peter Lang Publishing, NY, 1993

### **Nov. 2 Feminist Ethics**

--Susan F. Parsons, "Feminist Ethics" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction.* Bernard Hoose, ed., Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998

--Alison Jaggar, "Feminist Ethics." in *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory,* Hugh LaFollette, ed. Blackwell Publishers, Malden, MA, 2000

--Sojourner Truth, "Ar'n't I a Woman" in *Common Good, Uncommon Questions. A Primer in Moral Theology.* T. Backous, W.C.Graham, eds. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1997

--Joan Chittister, "What's Right with the Catholic Church?" in *Common Good, Uncommon Questions. A Primer in Moral Theology.* T. Backous, W.C.Graham, eds. Liturgical Press, Collegeville, MN, 1997

### **Nov. 6 Classic concepts: Toleration, Cooperation and Appropriation of Evil**

--James F. Keenan, SJ, "Prophylactics, Toleration and Cooperation: Contemporary Problems and Traditional Principles." *International Philosophical Quarterly* Vol. XXIX, No. 2 Issue No. 114, (June, 1989.)

--M. Cathleen Kaveny: "Appropriation of Evil: Cooperation's Mirror Image."  
*Theological Studies* 61 (2000) 280-313

**\*\*\*\*Preliminary Exam 2, covering material through Nov. 6, is distributed.\*\*\*\***

**Nov. 9 Ethics and the Church**

--Mahoney ch. 4

-- Josef Cardinal Ratzinger, "Instruction on the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian"

--Roger Mahony, "The Magisterium and Theological Dissent." in *Readings in Moral Theology No. 6. Dissent in the Church*. Paulist Press, NY, 1988.

--Charles Curran, "Public Dissent in the Church." in *Introduction to Christian Ethics. A Reader*. Ronald P. Hamel and Kenneth R. Himes, OFM, eds. Paulist Press, 1989

**Nov. 13 Moral Theology in an Ethically Pluralistic Culture:**

**Method 1: Deontology**

--Immanuel Kant, "Duty and Categorical Rules." in *Ethics. The Big Questions*. James P. Sterba, ed. Blackwell Publishers, Malden MA, 1998

--Fred Feldman, "Kantian Ethics." In *Ethics. The Big Questions*. James P. Sterba, ed. Blackwell Publishers, Malden MA, 1998

**\*\*\*\*Preliminary Exam 2 is due.\*\*\*\***

**Nov. 16 Method 2: Relationality/Responsibility**

--Charles E. Curran, "The Stance of Moral Theology." from *New Perspectives in Moral Theology*. Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1976

--Charles E. Curran, "Relationality-Responsibility Model," from *The Catholic Moral Tradition Today. A Synthesis*. Georgetown Univ. Press, Washington D.C. 1999

--H.R. Niebuhr, "The Meaning of Responsibility," from *From Christ to the World. Introductory Readings in Christian Ethics*. Wayne G. Boulton, Thomas D. Kennedy, and Allan Verhey, eds. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, MI, 1994.

**Nov. 20 American Academy of Religion. No class.**

**Nov. 23 Thanksgiving!**

**Nov. 27 Method 3: Utilitarianism and Proportionalism**

--John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Books 1-4

--Bernard Williams, "Against Utilitarianism" in *Ethics: The Big Questions*. James P. Sterba, ed. Blackwell Pub., Malden, MA, 1998

--Charles E. Curran, "Utilitarianism and Contemporary Moral Theology: Situating the Debates." from *Readings in Moral Theology No. 1. Moral Norms and Catholic Tradition*. Charles E. Curran and Richard A.

McCormick, S.J., eds. Paulist Press New York 1975.

---Richard Gula, "The Morality of Human Action." in *Reason Informed by Faith. Foundations of Catholic Morality*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989

**Nov. 30 Method 4: Virtue Ethics**

--James F. Keenan, S.J. "Virtue Ethics" in *Christian Ethics. An Introduction*. Bernard Hoose, ed., Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1998

--Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Books 1 and 2. Terence Irwin, trans. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing, 1999 (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)

--Thomas Aquinas, O.P., "Of the Virtues, as to their Essence" in *Summa Theologiae*, I IIae, q.55

--Bonnie Kent, "Habits and Virtues." from *The Ethics of Aquinas*. Stephen Pope, ed. Georgetown Univ. Press, Washington DC, 2002

**Dec. 4 Catholic Social Teaching**

--Peter J. Henriot, Edward P. DeBerri, and Michael J. Schultheis, "Our Best Kept Secret," and "An Evolving Social Message," in *Catholic Social Teaching. Our Best Kept Secret. Centenary Edition*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1992

--Donal Dorr, "Evaluation." in *Option for the Poor. A Hundred Years of Catholic Social Teaching*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 2002

--Pope Paul VI. Apostolic Letter "Octogesima Adveniens" 1971

**Dec. 7 Topic 1: Readings TBA**

**Dec. 11 Topic 2; Readings TBA**

**Dec. 14 Conclusion and Summary**

--Mahoney ch. 8