

Syllabus

Course Syllabus

Course Number and Title	RE 308 Christian Ethics Spring Day 2011
Course Instructor	<p>David L. Coleman</p> <p>Professor of Religious Studies and Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts</p> <p>Office Hours: Please call my assistant, Cassandra Sakamoto and make an appointment. I am available M – F from 9:00am to 5:00pm (Lunch 12:00 noon to 1:00pm).</p>
Catalog Description	<p>RE 308 Christian Ethics (3)</p> <p>Examines the ethical implications of the Christian faith for the individual and community. Students will be engaged in a dialogue among Christian and non-Christian traditions of human dignity and social justice. Special emphasis will be placed on liberation from oppressive social structures, competing images of church and religion in society, and the assertion that humans are created in the image of God.</p>
Course Description	<p>Working within the structure of the Catalog Description, we will review the meaning of "ethics" and "morality" in our everyday lives and explore why a religious frame makes a difference to ethics and ethical reasoning. While our focus will be on the Christian tradition in ethics, we will enter into a dialogue with several of the other major religious traditions to search out commonalities and differences, particularly on some of the specific issues concerning human dignity and social justice.</p>

Within the Western and even Christian tradition, one can identify a number of perspectives on ethics. Some want to focus on rules and obligations, some on utilitarian outcomes based on achievement of the greatest happiness for the greatest number, others still on what sort of person we ought to be. This last view is the primary focus of our course. What sort of person should I be? What is real happiness for you and me as human beings? How do I come to know happiness and live it fully in everyday life? As we will see, answering these questions will be cause for looking at human culture and history, philosophy, rights, duties and obligations and how these are lived by people seeking the fullness of their humanity and the fullness of community and the common good.

Required Text and Readings

Mattison, William C. *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*.

Grand Rapids, Michigan: Brazos Press, a Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2008.

Several encyclicals and documents from the Catholic Social Teaching Tradition and commentaries:

1. John XXIII, *MATER ET MAGISTRA*

a. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_xxiii/encyclicals/documents/hf_j-xxiii_enc_150

b. "Commentary on *Mater et magistra (Christianity and Social Progress)*" by Marvin L. Mich. Chapter in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 191-216.

2. Vatican II, *DECLARATION ON RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (Dignitatis Humanae)*

a. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_1

b. "Commentary on *Dignitatis humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)*," by Leslie Griffin. Chapter in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*,

ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 244-265.

3. World Synod of Bishops 1971, Justice in the World

a. http://www.osjspm.org/majordoc_justicia_in_mundo_offical_test.aspx

b. "Commentary on *Justitia in mundo (Justice in the World)*," by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. Chapter in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 333-362.

4. John Paul II, On Social Concern (*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*)

a. http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_301

b. "Commentary on *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (On Social Concern)," by Charles E. Curran, Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M., and Thomas A. Shannon. Chapter in *Modern Catholic Social Teaching: Commentaries and Interpretation*, ed. by Kenneth R. Himes, O.F.M. (Georgetown: Georgetown University Press, 2005), 415-435.

Characteristics of Marianist Universities

Excerpts from

Joseph J. Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996).

David E. Cooper and Simon P. James, *Buddhism, Virtue and Environment* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 35-105.

Other articles may be assigned as found on the syllabus.

**Grade
Calculation
Process**

Discussion forums: There are ten discussion forums, each worth 30 points. You can score up to 300 points on discussion threads.

Dropbox Essays: There are two essays due for this course. Each essay is worth up to 100 points.

Group Presentations: There are three presentations required for this course. You will be assigned one presentation.

Final Exam: There is one final exam for this course. It is required and it is face-to-face. The date will be announced later.

Discussion Forums:	10 forums	30 points	300 points	30% of total
Dropbox Essays:	2 essays	100 points	200 points	20% of total
Group Presentations:	3	100 points	300 points	30% of total
Final Exam:	1 exam	200 points	200 points	20% of total

A = 90% - 100%; B = 80% - 89%; C = 70% - 79%; D = 60% - 69%; F = less than 60%

**Student
Learning
Outcomes**

General Education Learning Outcomes

1. Demonstrate an understanding of Catholic theology, its historical development and position within the broader Christian and human traditions
2. Demonstrate a capacity to articulate the fundamental questions of ultimate meaning that will intellectually and spiritually engage them throughout their lives.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. You will demonstrate an understanding of the riches of the Western (particularly Christian) traditions of moral thought. (GE Outcome 1)
2. You will demonstrate an understanding of moral theology as informing the common everyday questions of our lives primarily through the concept of virtue. (GE Outcomes 1 and 2)
3. You will demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the basic issues in contemporary moral theology. (Program Learning Outcome 3)

4. You will demonstrate an understanding of three fundamental ultimate questions in our lives: Is there a God and if so what is God like? What is the meaning of human life? What happens after death? (GE Outcome 1)
5. You will demonstrate an understanding of several particular moral issues introduced in the book and course readings.(Program Learning Outcome 3)

Course Expectations and Policies

RE 308 is a writing-intensive, upper division Religion course taught online during the Spring 2011 semester. Consequently, the course requires an extensive amount of independent reading, writing, discussion and critical reflection in order to satisfactorily complete course requirements. Research online and independent reading about the issues we will study demonstrates intellectual curiosity and independence and is characteristic of "A" work.

Regular Participation This course is conducted entirely online using a variety of instructional support technologies including e-mail, threaded discussions, and written presentations posted online. These important elements of your online learning experience require your active and sustained participation, and thus constitute course "attendance."

"Threaded" class discussions are utilized as a means of stimulating and encouraging thoughtful reflection concerning the topics, themes and subject matter covered in the course. Regular weekly participation in these discussions is required. In the event that technical difficulties disrupt access or utilization of the Ecollege site, the instructor may elect to utilize e-mail to conduct discussions and maintain dialogue.

With the possible exception of documented emergencies, there will be no extensions given on assignment due dates or the final examination without the prior approval of the instructor. Students who fail to submit assignments or comply with other requirements are advised to withdraw from the course in order to avoid a final course grade of "F". Grades of "Incomplete" will only be given in cases of documented extraordinary circumstances (see Incomplete Grades).

Reading Assignments: This course is reading and writing intensive. As indicated in the Course Schedule, there is usually a reading assignment to complete during each course week. In order for students to participate effectively in weekly threaded discussions, prepare for examinations and complete written assignments, it is expected that each student complete assigned readings during the time period indicated on the Course Schedule.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Qualitative Assessments and Quantitative Criteria

Your achievement of course learning objectives is accomplished partially through active participation in collaborative online learning experiences, such as weekly responses to discussion questions in the threaded discussions. Typically, participation in discussions includes:

- (1) composing and posting a response to an assigned discussion topic or question,**
- (2) posting a comment, observation or question in response to the contribution of another student, and**
- (3) responding to the questions, comments or observations students have posted in response to your contribution to the discussion.**

Consequently, it is recommended that you review discussions regularly in order

to remain current with the progress of discussions taking place and to respond to comments or questions in a timely manner.

Good participation, however, is more than simply the number of times you post a note. Instead, good participation in an online learning environment is determined through the application of qualitative criteria listed below. You are encouraged to use these criteria to guide the composition your contributions to Forum discussions.

- (1) Comments are supported by more than personal opinion, such as cited references or quotes, cited Internet research information or other credible resources;
- (2) Comments are fair and balanced even if in disagreement;
- (3) Comments contribute meaningfully to the discussion by bringing new insights, experiences or perceptions.

Note: Frivolous comments and hollow statements do not contribute meaningfully to a discussion. Examples of comments that do not contribute meaningfully to a discussion include "good job," "I agree," "I wish I had thought of that," "I like/don't like your paragraph," and-so-forth.

Instead, meaningful comments add qualitative "value" to a discussion by lending new information, insights or perspectives that enrich our understanding of the subject under discussion.

Examinations

There is one examination administered during the course: the Final Examination.

The Final Examination requires in-person attendance on the date/time listed in the Course Schedule. The date and time will be posted no later than the end of January.

No make-up examinations will be allowed for the Final Examination.

Weekly Chapter Tests may be scheduled for Saturday. Check the schedule for test times.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that they are available to take the quiz

during the assigned time period.

Grading Excellence in this course requires not only academic mastery of course content, but also personal reflection upon the academic issues raised in the course. At MINIMUM, satisfactory performance entails the successful completion of the following: (1) ten weekly discussions concerning topics provided by the instructor (30 points per week); (2) two essays (200 points total); (3) satisfactory presentation of assigned chapters (300 points total) , and (4) one comprehensive final examination (200 points total).

POLICIES

Deadlines: Students are expected assume responsibility for knowing, observing and meeting assignment deadlines as described in the course schedule.

Late or make-up assignments will not be accepted by the instructor, except under extraordinary documented circumstances, such as military deployment or serious illness. It is the students' responsibility to provide the instructor with verifiable documentation for any extraordinary circumstances that prevent the submission of assignments on time, and to present a plan to complete missed deadlines and/or assignments missed to the instructor for approval.

Withdrawals: Students who miss two consecutive weeks of class, prior to the withdrawal deadline, may be withdrawn from class by the instructor. The student must obtain written permission from the Instructor to re-enroll in a class from which a student has been withdrawn. Only when a student presents written evidence (such as a military order, physician's statement or other reasonable justification), will a request for post-deadline withdrawal be approved.

Withdrawal forms may be obtained from the Advising and Retention Office.

Incomplete Grades: Incomplete grades will not be issued except in extraordinary circumstances, i.e., military deployment, medical or other emergency. In no case will an Incomplete grade be assigned unless the majority of work has been completed to the satisfaction of the Instructor. Should an extraordinary circumstance arise which will or may prevent the completion of required course work, contact the Instructor immediately.

Plagiarism: The Chaminade University of Honolulu General Catalog states that:

"Plagiarism is the offering of work of another as one's own. Plagiarism is a serious offense and may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- 1. Complete or partial copying directly from a published or unpublished source without proper acknowledgement to the author. Minor changes in wording or syntax are not sufficient to avoid charges of plagiarism. Proper acknowledgement of the source of a text is always mandatory.**
- 2. Paraphrasing the work of another without proper author acknowledgement.**
- 3. Submitting as one's own original work (however freely given or purchased) the original exam, research paper, manuscript, report, computer file, or other assignment that has been prepared by another individual.**

This policy statement means that: students are not allowed to submit the work of another as their own; that altering the work of another for presentation as one's own constitutes plagiarism; and that all sources must be properly cited.

If a student commits plagiarism, or fails to properly cite all sources, then the student will receive no credit for the assignment and the Academic Dean will be notified accordingly.

If there is any doubt about whether or not the use or submission of a particular work constitutes plagiarism, contact the Instructor for guidance and assistance.

MUTUAL CONSIDERATION AND RESPECT

As subjects examined during this course may touch upon topics, beliefs, and/or issues considered sensitive by some students, it is imperative that all students demonstrate courtesy and respect concerning the views, opinions, and beliefs of others

Course Schedule

Schedule of Classes

January 10 – 15:

Course introduction; Student Bios; Characteristics of Marianist Universities

January 16 – 22:

Chapter One: Morality, Happiness, and the "Good Life": How Do I Live My Life, and Why Do I Live That Way?

Please read the Introduction and Chapter One, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 11 - 37

January 23 – 29:

Chapter Two: Intentions, Good Acts, and Human Freedom

Chapter Three: Why Virtue? The Moral Life as More Than Actions

Please read Chapter Two and Three, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 38 - 74.

January 30 – Feb 5:

Chapter Four: The Virtue of Temperance: Living a Passionate Moral Life

Chapter Five: The Virtue of Prudence: Knowing the Truth and Living It

Please read Chapter Four and Chapter Five, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 75 - 112.

Feb 6 – Feb 12:

Chapter Six: Alcohol and American College Life: Test Case One

Please read Chapter Six, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 113 - 133

You will be responsible for preparing a group presentation for this test case.

We will try to set up a face-to-face meeting for the presentations if it possible.

I will send an email to gather some possible times for the meeting on-campus.

It will likely be in the evening, but I will let you know.

Feb 13 – Feb 19:

Chapter 7: The Virtue of Justice and Justice in Waging War

Please read Chapter Seven, *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 134-159.

Feb 20 – Feb 26:

Chapter 8: Using the Atom Bomb in World War II

Please read Chapter Eight in *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 160 - 179.

You will be responsible for preparing a group presentation for this test case.

We will try to set up a face-to-face meeting for the presentations if it possible.

I will send an email to gather some possible times for the meeting on-campus.

It will likely be in the evening, but I will let you know.

Feb 27 – Mar 5:

Chapter 9: The Virtue of Fortitude and the Unity of the Virtues

Chapter 10: A Transition: Actions, Practices, and Big-Picture Beliefs about the

Way Things Are

Please read Chapter Nine and Chapter Ten of *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 180 - 21

Mar 6 – Mar 12:

Chapter 11: The Virtue of Faith: Answering Big-Picture Questions

Chapter 12: Sin: Corruption of Human Happiness

Please read Chapter Eleven and Chapter 12 of *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 213 - 218.

Mar 13 – Mar 19:

Chapter 13: The Virtue of Hope: Eternity in this Life and the Next

Chapter 14: Jesus Christ: Incarnation and Life in Christ

Please read Chapter Thirteen and Chapter Fourteen of *Introduction to*

Moral Theology, p. 251 - 289.

Mar 20 – Mar 26:

Spring Break

Please note that you have a presentation coming up for April 3 - 9.

Enjoy your break ... I will be at conference and will not have steady access so answers may come at a slow rate!

Mar 27 – Apr 2:

Chapter 15: The Virtue of Charity: The Form of the Christian Life

Chapter 16: Grace; The Gift of the Holy Spirit for the Virtuous Life

Please read Chapter Fifteen and Chapter Sixteen of *Introduction to*

Moral Theology, p. 290 - 332.

Apr 3 – Apr 9:

Chapter 17: Chastity and Nonmarital Sex: Test Case Three

Please read Chapter Seventeen in *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 333 - 363.

Chapter 18: Euthenasia: Test Case Four

Please read Chapter Eighteen in *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 364 - 392.

You will be responsible for preparing a group presentation this week for either Chapter 17 or Chapter 18. We will try to set up a face-to-face meeting for the presentations if it possible. I will send an email to gather some possible times for the meeting on-campus. It will likely be in the evening, but I will let you know.

Apr 10 – Apr 16:

Epilogue: Praying For Virtues

Please read the Epilogue of *Introduction to Moral Theology*, p. 393 -410.

Apr 17 – Apr 23:

Do other religions talk about virtue ethics? This week we read an interpretation of Buddhist virtue ethics that I hope will help you see the power of this way of thinking about your life and choices.

Please read David E. Cooper and Simon P. James, *Buddhism, Virtue and Environment* (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005), 35-105.

Apr 24 – Apr 30:

Final Exam Review Week

May 1 – May 5:

Final Exam TBA
