

RE/PH 338
Religion, Philosophy
& Social Ethics

Dr. Jim Christiana, SM
735-4880

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to present students with an interdisciplinary experience in the study of ethics from the perspectives of the social sciences, theology and the humanities.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Stephen Carter, *Integrity*
- Joseph Kotva, *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics*

Additional readings will be placed on library reserve throughout the semester; students will also need to have access to a Bible for this class.

ORGANIZATION AND GRADES:

This course will attempt to interweave lectures, group discussion and presentations in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

Regular class attendance is expected and is of considerable importance to your success in this course. Students who accumulate more than three unexcused absences will begin to have their overall grade lowered. Students are never automatically entitled to make up exams or for other extensions of their assignment. It is the discretion of the instructor to determine if any makeups/extensions are to be given and under what circumstances and penalties.

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

- three or four in class exams (50%)
- three to four reflection essays (50%)

I invite students to make an appointment to see me during the semester; I do not enjoy teaching a class of strangers.

WEEK**(TENTATIVE) COURSE OUTLINE:****I--VI****Cultural and Philosophical constructs of SELF:****from archaic society to the modern period and beyond****READ: On library reserve (selections from: Rilke; Kafka; Descartes; Atwood)****READ: Carter, Integrity (chapters I--III; V)****VII--X****Problems in ethical decision making:****with special emphasis on the role of tradition and****community; autonomy of individual reason; and the formation of conscience****Reflections on the nature of SELF and moral character in Christian and non--Christian perspectives****What do we know about human motivation?****Sociological and Theological reflections on the biological and genetic foundations of virtue and vice****Insights from the cognitive sciences on how we interpret (the ethical and political) world and how we engage in decision making****READ: Carter, Integrity (chapters VII--XI)****READ: On library reserve****READ: selections from Kotva, Virtue Ethics****XI--end of semester****The relationship between the political and the ethical:****Can/should the State be morally neutral, or:****reflections on liberalism, conservatism, and communitarianism****What do Americans want from their government and churches anyway? {Reflections on the Lincoln--Douglas debates and the culture wars phenomenon}****READ: Carter, Integrity (chapters XII--XIV)**