

**RGT 1905  
CATHOLIC SOCIAL**

Fall Semester 2021 – Monday 2-4 – Professor Ronald Mercier, S.J.

**Course Description**

Introduction to Theological Ethics explores key concepts and questions regarding how a Christian is to live in response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and how such a response applies to pastoral practice. This course will include lectures, discussion, and seminar presentations.

**Course Objectives**

1. To build student competence in the field of theological ethics. By the end of the course, the student will be familiar with the major aspects of Christian and Catholic theological ethics.
2. To build student critical thinking skills so that they can better critique and formulate moral arguments. By the end of the course, the student will be able to create, evaluate, and improve moral arguments.
3. To demand (through examinations, presentations, papers, class discussions, and readings) that students both understand and can address how more technical material in the course relates to and illuminates how people live morally outside of formal studies.
4. The ultimate objective of the course is to immerse students in the foundations of moral theology to enable them to better understand, preach about, and counsel people on both everyday moral issues and the more publicly contested 'hot button' issues.

**Course Texts**

William C. Mattison, III, *Introducing Moral Theology: True Happiness and the Virtues*.  
(Available on Amazon and at Indigo, also available as an ebook through U of T Bookstore)

William Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise*  
(Available through UofT Library as e-book)

David Matzko McCarthy and M. Therese Lysaught, eds., *Gathered for the Journey: Moral Theology in Catholic Perspective*. On reserve at Regis College Library.

Pope St. John Paul II, *Veritatis splendor*

Pope Francis, *Fratelli tutti, Gaudete et exsultate, Laudato si*

(Papal documents available online through <https://www.vatican.va/>)

Various other materials will be available either on the web or from the class website.

**Course Requirements**

1. Attendance and Class Participation are expected. Missing classes is ground for lowering the final grade. Participation means being prepared for each class by having read and engaged the assignment. **Bring the assigned readings to class! If it is an electronic**

**reading, please consider printing it so it is readily available for quick reference.**

Questions and discussions are essential parts of the course that enable students to wrestle with difficult topics as well as teach and learn from each other. Granting sincerity and preparation, there are no stupid questions or unwelcome viewpoints. NB: All participation must be done in a respectful manner. All viewpoints are welcome in this class as long as they are respectful of others and open to critique.

2. On most weeks, students will submit two questions about specific aspects of the reading that they do not understand or wish to command or challenge. Questions must demonstrate that the student has seriously engaged the reading. The questions that refer to the textbook or article should cite the relevant page number. Questions should be no more than 2-3 sentences. *On the second week of class, students will instead submit a short assignment on the purpose of the ethics quiz.*
3. A) Preparation of one in-class presentation or case study for class presentation (1200-1600 words), and preparation of one or two responses (500-600 words) to the presentation / case studies presented by other students. Explanation of the style and format for these case studies and responses will be announced.
4. Final short paper: The final (1400-1600 word) paper should have the tone of a talk given to a parish group / college students / religious education class, or something analogous. The point here is to 'teach' material from this class, relevant to a particular audience on a particular occasion. (Tell me who the audience is, and what the occasion is. If it is a talk for a group of students or parish group, tell me what you have been invited to speak on and to whom.) You are evaluated not only on how well written the talk is, but the extent to which you demonstrate a firm comprehension of the material in our class, and ability to make it relevant to the occasion for which you are speaking. Further guidance for the talk will be provided toward the end of the semester.
5. An exam covering the content of the course up to the date of the Exam (Class 7). The purpose of this exam is to evaluate the learning throughout the course, to synthesize the material, and to assure that the student has a solid foundation in moral theology for their continuing studies.

**\*\*\*Word counts for all submitted work to be stated on the first page.\*\*\***

#### **Course evaluation and grading**

Attendance, participation, and weekly questions	20%
In-Class Presentation / Case Study	15%
Response to a Presentation or Case Study	5%
Final Short Paper ('talk')	30%
Mid-term Exam	30%

*If English is not your primary language or if you have a documented disability, please contact the instructor early in the semester so that you can be properly accommodated.*

*It should go without saying, but unfortunately must be said, that all work submitted in this class must be your own. As for papers, it is wise to get help from others in study groups, at the*

writing center, or from persons knowledgeable on a particular topic. But all writing must be your own, and you should always cite (using footnotes) ideas of others when they are not your own. If you are unsure about whether something counts as plagiarism, find out before you submit it! (I'll be glad to help.)

### CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNED READINGS

(Starred items are available online through UT Library Portal)

- Sept. 13 Introduction: What is Moral Theology / Theological Ethics?
- Sept. 20 Happiness as the goal of human life  
Scripture and Ethics  
Required Reading: **IMT**, ch. 1  
**ST I-II** 1.7; 2.7; 3.8; 4, 5, 6  
<http://summa-theologiae.org/T11.htm>  
**GDL**, ch. 1  
**VS**, ch. 1, nos. 1-27
- Sept. 27 Human Acts and Human Character and Virtues  
Required Reading: **IMT**, chs. 2 and 3  
Linda Hogan, 'Vulnerability: An Ethic for a Divided World' in Kristin Heyer, James Kennan, and Andrea Vicini, eds., **Building Bridges in Sarajevo: The Plenary Papers from CWETC 2018** (N.Y.: Orbis, 2018), 216-220.
- Oct. 4 Perception, Practices, and Narratives  
Required reading: **GDL**, chs. 2 and 7  
Margaret Farley, 'A Framework for Moral Discernment,' in James F. Keenan, ed., **Catholic Theological Ethics Past Present and Future** (N.Y.: Orbis, 2011), 138-146.  
William T. Cavanaugh, 'Consumer Culture', in McCarthy and Lysaught, 241-259.
- Oct. 11 **Thanksgiving – no class**
- Oct. 18 Practical Reason and Conscience; Desires and Inclinations  
Required Reading: **IMT**, ch.5  
**GDL**, chs. 3 and 6  
James Keenan, *Vulnerability, Recognition and Conscience: Making Connections*. A paper delivered at Regis College, Apr.28, 2021. (Used with permission of the author.)
- Oct. 25 **Reading Week – no class**

- Nov. 1 Justice and Authority: Law Natural and Divine  
 Required Reading: **IMT**, chs. 7 and 11  
 Dana Dillon and David McCarthy, 'Natural Law, Law, and Freedom',  
 in McCarthy and Lysaught, 153-176.
- Nov. 8 **Mid-term Exam**
- Nov. 15 Courage, Temperance, and Sin  
 Required Reading: **IMT**, chs. 4, 9, 12  
 Kenneth Himes, O.F.M., "The Formation of Conscience: The Sin of Sloth  
 and the Significance of Spirituality," in James Keating, ed.,  
**Spirituality and Moral Theology** (NY: Paulist, 2000), 59-80.
- Nov. 22 Faith, Hope and Charity  
 Required Readings: **IMT**, chs. 13, 14, 15  
 Richard Gula, **Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic  
 Morality** (N.Y.: Paulist Press, 1989), 89-105.
- Nov. 29 Moral Principles  
 \*Kevin O'Rourke, O.P., "Complications: A Catholic hospital, a pregnant  
 mother and a questionable excommunication", **America** (August  
 2, 2010), 15-16.  
 \*Kevin O'Rourke, O.P., "From Intuition to Moral Principle: Examining the  
 Phoenix Case in the Light of Church Tradition", **America**  
 (November 15, 2010), 11-14.  
 \*Michael R. Panicola, 'Discernment in the Neonatal Context', **Theological  
 Studies** 60 (1999), 723-746.  
 \*Julie Hanlon Rubio, "Moral cooperation with evil and social ethics",  
**Journal of the Society of Christian Ethics**, 31 (2011), 103-122.  
 David Hollenbach, **The Common Good and Christian Ethics** (Cambridge:  
 Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), 3-32.
- Dec. 6 Grace, Gifts, Discernment  
 Required Reading: **IMT**, ch. 16  
**GDL**, ch. 7  
 \*Tobias Winright, 'Reimagining Just War as Anchored in, Tethered to, and  
 Tempered by Mercy', **Journal of Religious Ethics**, 48.3 (2020),  
 436-457.  
 Pope Francis, *Gaudete et exsultate*, ch. 4.
- Dec. 13 Christian Community: Friendship, Ecclesiology, Worship, and Witness  
 Required Readings: **GDL**, ch. 8  
**VS**, ch. 3, nos. 84-120

William T. Cavanaugh, 'Pilgrim People', in McCarthy and Lysaught, 106-111.

M. Therese Lysaught, 'Love and Liturgy', in McCarthy and Lysaught, 24-42.

M. Therese Lysaught, 'Love Your Enemies: Toward a Christoform Bioethic', 307-328.