

TESP 45: Christian Ethics

WINTER QUARTER 2008

Monday, Wednesday, Friday 11:45am-12:50pm

Kenna Hall 107

Instructor: Dr. Diana C. Gibson

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Prerequisite: Introductory level course (SCTR 1-19, TESP 1-19, or RSOC 1-19)

Course Description: With a focus on social ethics, this course will explore the moral implications of the Christian commitment, the formulation and development of the principles of Christian ethics for persons and within communities, and their application to areas of contemporary life. There will be an emphasis on examining how the quality of relationships to self, community, world and history is formed, informed and transformed. Particular attention will be placed on issues of economic justice (poverty & wealth) and war (violence & nonviolence, just war and pacifism). Students will be required to participate in an Arrupe Center community placement which includes 2 hours per week off campus as part of their learning experience.

Course Objectives:

Students will be able to:

1. Explain the classical basics of how the Christian tradition envisions the moral life.
2. Articulate and explore their own moral identity and perspective, and cite significant gifts, limitations and assumptions their own experience brings to the ethical task.
3. Examine 3 alternative lenses within the Christian tradition for engaging with ethical concerns.
4. Analyze and critique ethical arguments and assumptions presented by church, society, and oneself.
5. Create a "toolbox" of sources, methods, principles and lenses and be able to use these to grapple with ethical issues.

Required Text:

Russell B. Connors, Jr. and Patrick T. McCormick, *Character, Choices, and Community:*

The Three Faces of Christian Ethics Ethics ("CCC")

Barbara Ehrenreich, *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* ("N/D")

Readings on ERes, the internet, and library reserve.

Students need to access to a Bible.

Recommended Texts:

Robert McAfee Brown, *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

William C. Spohn, *Go and Do Likewise: Jesus and Ethics* (NY: Continuum Pub. Co., 1999).

Class Format:

1. Classes will include lecture, discussion, film, student & small group presentations.
2. Out of classroom required activities include the Arrupe Center community placement (2 hours/week), lecture by Lisa Sowle Cahill (January 15, 7:30pm, the Religious Studies Department will pay for your ticket), and viewing one film (flexible hours).
3. Early in the quarter students will be assigned to a small group based on Arrupe Center placement. These groups will meet together throughout the quarter to 1) discuss readings and class topics; 2) prepare a class presentation on your Arrupe placement experience; and 3) present and discuss student's "toolbox" papers.
4. Emphasis will be on students raising questions, grappling with new perspectives and concepts of ethical analysis, challenging assumptions, and making connections with contemporary issues.

Course Requirements:

1. Regular class attendance, reading of all required material, engaged and respectful class participation. (15%)
 - a. Students are expected to arrive in class on time and attend every class meeting. Students are responsible for obtaining missed notes, updated assignments and any other news from other students or the instructor *outside* of regular scheduled class time. Frequent tardiness or missing more than 3 class periods *will result in lowering your final grade*. If illness or family emergency requires you to miss more than 3 class periods, you must meet with instructor to discuss.
 - b. Students are expected to read all required material, take consistent notes, and arrive in class ready to discuss, raise questions, offer insights, and answer questions in a manner that reflects your thoughtful reading. I will often begin class by asking a student to start us off with a question, comment or summary of assigned reading, so come to each class prepared!
 - c. Respectful, engaged discourse will be the rule for the class. Disagreements and differences will be encouraged, however disrespectful comments will immediately lower your grade. Side conversations are a sign of disrespect.
2. Quizzes will be given on occasion and without notice (except for the 2/2 quiz on the Romero film). Doing well on these quizzes requires thorough and thoughtful reading of texts and attentive engagement with films & lecture. You may use your own, handwritten notes for these quizzes, but no texts. Quizzes cannot be made up, and will be given at the beginning of class. I will drop your lowest quiz score. (10%)
3. Moral Autobiography: This is to be a 3-5 page paper, (double spaced) in which you examine your own sense of moral identity and moral perspective, as well as the communities and experiences that have shaped you: family, church, geography, race, gender, orientation, class, etc. More detailed instruction will be given in class. (10%)

4. Essay on "Romero" or "Soldiers of Conscience": This is to be a 4-6 page paper in which you examine one character in one of these films (it does *not* have to be a main character). You are to begin by raising significant historical or cultural considerations which inform their situation, and raising 2-3 ethical questions in relation to their situation about which you are genuinely uncertain. You are then to explore 1) their relationships & community; 2) the influences which informed the formation of their character and conscience; 3) the stories and script/ures by which they claim to live; 4) how they made choices and decisions; and 5) their spiritual journey. Some imagination will be necessary, but the goal is to be as honest as possible to the character as s/he is portrayed. You are then to develop one ethical argument supporting their decision/action, and one opposing it, using material we discuss in class. You are to conclude with insights you've gained from this exercise and/or the film. (15%)

5. Arrupe Center community placement offers a community based learning experience with which we will engage the tools and concepts we are learning in class. The goals are to challenge your assumptions, raise questions, develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of social issues, and foster the ability to use Christian ethics in authentic ways as you engage in relationships and society. Your placement will require an onsite orientation, 2 hours per week off campus, and 2 evaluation/reflections. (10%) Additional course requirements include:
 - a. in-class reflection paper (5%)
 - b. small group presentation to the whole class in which you will explore and share what you have learned; (5%)
 - c. 4-6 page essay (double spaced) making connections between 1) your experience, observations, and insights from your Arrupe placement; 2) *Nickel and Dimed*; 3) the Roman Catholic church's teaching of a "preferential option for the poor"; and 4) the Jesus story or other scriptural story; concluding with 1 proposed action or policy for individuals, church or society based on principles of Christian ethics. (10%)

6. Toolbox: This project should illustrate what sources, methods, principles, and perspectives you have accumulated in your "Christian Ethics Toolbox." You also need to highlight *no less than 3* and *no more than 6* of the tools which you believe most essential, why, and how and when you see yourself using them. A copy of this paper should be kept and brought to the final exam. Creativity, visual art, etc., are encouraged for this project. (5%)

7. Final Exam: The final exam will require you to show that you have a good grasp of the basics of traditional Christian ethics and at least 3 alternative Christian sources or methods for understanding the task of Christian ethics. You will also be given a case study in ethics and asked to articulate how you would use the tools from your "toolbox" to examine, probe, frame, choose, and act or speak an ethical response to the situation. (15%)

Course Policies

1. Class Discussion: You are expected to participate in discussion through *active listening* and *respectful response*. Questions and exchange of ideas must always be for the purpose of enhancing our understanding and learning. Thoughtful and consistent participation in class discussions is *required* to attain an “A” grade. Disruptive or disrespectful remarks will result in a lower grade. If you are having trouble finding ways to participate in this learning environment, please see me and I will be glad to discuss this with you.
2. Academic Honesty: Santa Clara University insists on honesty and integrity from all members of its community. The standards of the University preclude any form of cheating, plagiarism, forgery of signatures, and falsification of data. A student who commits any offense against academic honesty and integrity may receive a failing grade without a possibility of withdrawal. An offense may also dictate suspension or dismissal from the University. In particular, it is each student’s responsibility to understand the serious nature of plagiarism and the consequences of such activity. Please be certain to cite your sources very carefully in your papers. If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please do not hesitate to speak to me.
3. Attendance: You are expected to arrive to class on time and attend every class meeting. *Frequent tardiness or missing more than three class periods* will result in lowering of your final grade.
4. Late Work: All papers are due at the beginning of class on the dates indicated. The grade for late work will be lowered, by as much as one full letter grade for each calendar day that it is late. Exceptions will be granted only for *very good reasons*, and must be negotiated with instructor *before the due date*.
5. Spelling and Grammar: Spelling and grammar will affect the grade on your papers. If a paper contains significant errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation, the paper will be returned to you ungraded for you to revise. Please proofread your work carefully. Writing help is available at the Drahnann Center.

Grades

A = Outstanding. Awesome. Takes my breath away!

A- = Amazingly good. I want to stand up and cheer.

B+ = Very good. I want to clap, but I’m still in my seat.

B = Good, solid work. I’m impressed.

B- = Good, solid work, but I’m not excited.

C+ = Above average. No complaints.

C = Average. You’ve completed the assignment.

C- = You’ve mostly completed the assignment, but not thoroughly. Something is lacking, or perhaps your grammar or composition needs significant work.

D = I’ll give it back to you and give you another chance, but only once, and that is if it is not a presentation or the final exam.

F = Failure. Let’s not even go there.

Class Schedule

WEEK 1: Introduction

1/5 – Introduction, Class Overview

1/7 – Do Justice!

Read in preparation for class:

Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”

<http://www.historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=40>

1/9 – Experience as the Starting Point

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 1

WEEK 2: Christian Ethics & Social Responsibility

1/12 – The Person Constituted in and by Relationships

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 4

1/14 – The Church Amidst Social & Political Issues

Read in preparation for class:

Lisa Sowle Cahill, “U.S. bishops damaging rich Catholic faith tradition” from
National Catholic Reporter: <http://ncronline3.org/drupal/?q=node/2214>

1/15 - Cahill Lecture: Mayer Theatre, SCU, 7:30pm

1/16 – Faith & Politics: A New Era in Social Ethics

In preparation for class - attend lecture and review notes

WEEK 3: Who and Whose You Are

1/19 – NO CLASS – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

1/21 – Character

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 3 & 5

1/23 – Stories and Scripture

DUE: Moral Autobiography

WEEK 4: Christian Ethics In Story & Community

1/26 – Arrupe Placement Review

DUE at end of class: Reflection paper on Arrupe Placement

1/28 – Romero

Film

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 2

ERes - Wink, “Jesus Third Way: Nonviolent Engagement”

1/30 – Romero

Film

WEEK 5 – Scripture and Story

2/2 - Love Your Enemies? Moral Norm or Nice Idea?

QUIZ on Romero film

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 9 & Chapter 10 (page 194, “Truth from the Margins” to end of Chapter)

2/4 – Jesus Story

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 6 (pages 97 (“The Challenges of ...”) to 106, bottom)

ERes - Walter Wink, “Jesus’ Answer to Domination”

ERes – Brown, “Emmaus ... And Back Again: A New Form of Knowing” from *Unexpected News*

Luke 24:13-49

2/6 - Exodus Story

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 6 (pages 106 (“Eight Central Biblical ...”) to 112, end of chapter)

Exodus 1-17 (excerpts)

ERes: Robert McAfee Brown, “Exodus: God Takes Sides” from *Unexpected News: Reading the Bible with Third World Eyes*

WEEK 6 – Conscience & War

2/9 – Your Conscience is NOT Tweety bird

Read in preparation for class:

CCC Chapter 7 & Chapter 8 (page 142, “A Morally Mature Conscience” to 147, “How are We to Form Our Conscience”

2/11 – Conscientious Objectors & Soldiers Who Go to War

In Preparation for class – watch film “*Soldiers of Conscience*”

Alternative viewing hours will be arranged with Media Services; Students are responsible for viewing this film and taking notes in advance of class.

Read Summary of "The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise & Our Response"
Download: <http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/TheChallengeofPeace.pdf>
You need only print and read the Summary – pages 1-4

2/13 – The Soul of America

DUE: Essay on "*Romero*" or "*Soldiers of Conscience*"

In class: Rev. Raphael Warnock, Senior Pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
March 16, 2007, National Cathedral, Christian Peace Witness for Iraq

Read in preparation for class:

Martin Luther King, Jr., "A Time to Break Silence"

<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>

(text and audio; you are welcome to listen but REQUIRED to read)

WEEK 7 – Economic Justice, Conscience & Community

2/16 NO CLASS – President's Day

2/18 – Nickel and Dimed

Read in preparation for class:

Ehrenreich, N/D, Chapter 3 & Evaluation

Matthew 25: 31-46

2/20 – Blessed and Broken

Read in preparation for class:

Excerpts from *Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy*, Washington D.C.: National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1986; find online at http://www.osjspm.org/economic_justice_for_all.aspx

WEEK 8

2/23 - Preferential Option for the Poor

Read in preparation for class:

Ehrenreich, N/D, Introduction, Chapter 1 & 2

2/25 – Jesus and Ethics

Read in preparation for class:

ERes - Spohn, excerpts from *Go and Do Likewise*

Luke 10:25-37

2/27 – An Ethic of Complacency or Risk?

Read in preparation for Class:

ERes – Sharon Welch, excerpts from *A Feminist Ethic of Risk*

WEEK 9

3/2 – Small Group Presentations to Class on Arrupe Experience & Learning

3/4 - Small Group Presentations to Class on Arrupe Experience & Learning

3/6 - Review

DUE: Essay on N/D, Arrupe experience, etc.

WEEK 10

3/9 - Review

3/11 – Small group presentations and discussions on Christian ethics toolbox

DUE: Toolbox paper

3/13 FINAL CLASS

DUE: Toolbox project/paper

FINAL EXAM: Wednesday, March 18, 1:30-4:30pm