

**RSOC157: RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AND CONTEMPORARY MORAL
ISSUES: (CORE: RELIGION THEOLGY AND CULTURE 3)
Kenna 212**

**Pre -requisite RTC1 and RTC2 (in sequence) and completion of 88 Units to get RTC 3
Credit**

**Winter 2016
RTC Level 3:
Accepted for Applied Ethics Pathway**

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Office Hours: (Tuesday 2-3 or by appointment)**

Course Description:

The course will explore **selected moral issues** that face humanity today and **critically analyze** the responses given to these issues by the **selected religious** traditions including but not limited to the **Christian tradition(s)**. Issues to be analyzed will include issues pertaining to human life (eg **Euthanasia,) Issues pertaining to Human sexuality (eg gender and human rights, Same sex relationships) and global issues** (e.g. Poverty, War, Environmental degradation).

Given the **cultural** and religious diversity that characterizes the contemporary world, the central approach will be to explore **diverse perspectives** and compare and contrast the responses to selected moral issues from the perspective of *more than one religio-cultural context*. The goal is to highlight points of **difference and points of similarity and even map common grounds in efforts to forge morally viable responses selected issues**. The goal is also to gain insights into the **depth , complexities and even intersectionality** of the ethical issues of our time and the correspondingly complex responses to these issues . Through the course, students will also gain an analytical understanding of the **role /impact of religion as humans, individually or collectively navigate these complexities**.

Specific Objectives/Learning outcomes

Students who successfully complete this class will:

1. Demonstrate an **analytical awareness and appreciation of various ethical systems/ and theories** (eg Utilitarianism, Theories of Justice , the Human Rights Paradigm) and how these are applied in the navigation of *ethical reasoning and decision making* surrounding the **selected contemporary moral issues** and dilemmas

2. Demonstrate ability critically to explore the ***relationship between religion and morality***.
3. Identify and analytically evaluate diverse ***religious perspectives*** on **selected** ethical issues. (eg analytically compare Buddhist and Christian responses to Poverty)
4. Show a critical awareness and appreciation of the **depth and complexities** regarding the selected ethical issues and how these **complexities shape the responses** given to the issues.
5. Demonstrate ability critically to ***formulate and analyze their own moral*** responses to contemporary moral issues in light of their analytical engagement with religious perspectives on various/selected ethical issues..
6. *Demonstrate an analytical understanding of the commonalities and differences in (selected religious) worldviews*) and demonstrate an understanding of how these **commonalities and differences** in worldview shape responses to contemporary moral issues. (eg Christian versus Buddhist views on Euthanasia)

RSOC 157 In the Core Curriculum:

This course fulfils The RTC (Religion, Theology & Culture) 3 Core Goals and Objectives

Special Note (1): RSOC157 In the New Core Curriculum:

RSOC 157 is one of the several courses that are designed to fulfill RTC3 (Religion, Theology and Culture 3) core requirements. According to the *Core Curriculum guidelines*, these courses build on **the first 2 courses (RTC 1&2)** and are designed to help students **apply insights** from the study of religion to “*Difficult , open ended questions of vital interest to society*”. In the case of **RSOC 157** such *difficult* , complex and open- ended questions emerge in connection with the many contemporary scenarios that render life vulnerable in multiple ways particularly under the forces of globalization . The implications of religion as humanity wrestles with complex, difficult issues such as the seemingly ubiquitous violent conflicts, seemingly escalating environmental crisis and extreme poverty presents opportunities and challenges as humanity seeks sustainable and viable solutions to the complex questions and issues of urgent ethical concern today . **RSOC 157 becomes a platform** analytically to explore these opportunities and challenges

It is expected, then, that students who complete RSOC 157 as an **RTC 3** will achieve the following **(2)** Objectives of the **RTC3** as part of the Core Curriculum

- a) Be able to identify **diverse perspectives** and **evaluate ethical positions** on contemporary Questions.
- b) Be able to **evaluate and apply insights** from the study of religion to **open ended questions facing contemporary society**:

See Details and guidelines about the core curriculum here

<http://www.scu.edu/provost/ugst/core/index.cfm>

The above **RTC3** core objectives and goals are embedded in RSOC157 course goals and objectives. These objectives and goals will be achieved /tested /nurtured through a **variety of course activities** and assignments as follows:

Course Requirements: (AKA) Means of achieving goals or learning outcomes:

1. **Attendance** : This will be monitored routinely and will comprise **5%** of final grade
2. **Adequate preparation and for class by a critical and annotated reading** of the required texts **prior to class**. Evidence of preparation should be manifested in the students' ability to respond to questions in class or in preparation for class both **oral and written**. In order to monitor this preparedness, students will be asked to **submit written answers to specific** questions based on the readings. They will also be called upon in class to respond to questions based on their analytical readings of the texts **(10%)**.
3. **Active participation** in class discussions both in structured group work and voluntary suggestion of ideas or voluntary answering of questions in class discussions. Participation will be **evaluated for quality as well as quantity** of your contribution to discussions and other class activities designed to facilitate understanding of the issues at stake. Your contributions should not only **show that you understand the issues at stake**, they should also manifest your analytical/critical skills as defined very explicitly in Keeley , in "*Asking the Right Questions*". (see excerpts on Camino) The interventions and contributions you make should also be marked by a **sense of collegiality** and mutual respect for all involved in RSOC 157 as a **learning community**. Participating involves both **engaged and analytical listening** to what is being said as well as **engaged and analytical speech** geared towards "**moving the conversation along**". (See also paragraph on class procedures below) **10%**
4. **Midterm/learning outcome exercise** : This will be designed to test mastery of class content discussed by week 6 .Format TBA **(20%) This**
5. **Group class presentation**: Topics of relevance to the course will be selected for group discussion in consultation with the instructor. The group will **research the topic** and present its findings in class. The mode of presentation will be optional but could be in the form of a debate and could include audio visual aids , research and presentation of a specific faith community and its response to a specific moral issues etc. Each person will receive the grade **jointly earned by the group**. For each of the group presentation, the presenting group will submit a 3 page analytical **synthesis of their topic**, how they researched it, what they found out in the process, matters arising etc.) .The rest of the class will act as **active discussants** and **respondents** to the presentation, asking appropriate questions and contributing to the debate /discussion in an analytical manner . **NB When groups are presenting , active participation as defined in 3 above will be particularly crucial. It will be mapped and evaluated accordingly . 15 (1 pager statement from audience will be collected)**
6. **2 Analytical response papers Minimum 3 Maximum 5 double** spaced typewritten pages. These should reveal your critical engagement with an issues or issues (limit to 2) arising out of the readings and class discussions around the selected themes. This

should be the **opportunity personally** to explore an issue raised through the readings that **intrigues you**, by analytically questioning or commenting on it (see course goals/objectives above). See also excerpts from the book : Asking the Right questions on how to **identify issues in other people's work or name and articulate issues in your own writings. (pdfs will be posted n Camino) 20%**.

7. **One final Synthesizing /Analytical / Paper in the form of a book review:** Minimum 8 pages maximum 10 pages: see book review list above. Detailed guidelines will be provided by week 7 **Chose your book early enough** so that you can begin reading and **reflecting on it** alongside the **texts and thematic** discussions thereof and make notes along the way so that your week **10 task will be easier**. Due on Thursday exam week on or before 4:30 PM in the mailbox outside my office , Kenna 323J as well as on Camino **20%**

Total For the Course 100%

Criteria for Grading:

Please note that your grade is **cumulative** and is **based on how well you do on the various course requirements**. Grades will be computed as follows:

“A” Will be given for **outstanding** work both in class and written assignments. An **“A”** student presents his or her work coherently, clearly and **critically**. His or her Written work is **systematic, relevant and well articulated** addressing issues at stake Adequately.

“B” Will be given for work that is of **high quality**, which adequately addresses Itself **to the issues and is relatively well articulated**.

“C”. Will be given for work which barely **meets the minimal requirements** of the course.

“D”. Poorly presented work; **barely relevant**, incoherent and ill articulated.

F. Irrelevant, incoherent work that dose not meet the requirements of the course at all.

NB: A total of 100 points are possible for the course as a whole. **A final letter grade** will be assigned according to the following percentile scale:

90%-100% A
80%-89% B
70%-79% C
60%-69% D
Below 69% F

NB: The bottom 2 numbers within each grade category respectively corresponds to **plus or minus grade designations**: e.g. **80%-82% =B, 88%-89%= B+ etc.**

Policy on Plagiarism:

Students in this course are reminded that **plagiarism and academic dishonesty in any form is a serious issue and stands to be penalized**. Students should therefore be aware of the strong sanctions against plagiarism and academic dishonesty. For a full presentation of University policies concerning plagiarism, see:

<http://www.scu.edu/studentlife/reources/academicintegrity>. If proven, charges of plagiarism could also result in **an automatic F for the course**. Consequently, students are encouraged to develop a strong sense of the need for academic honesty at all times, a fact that is self-rewarding both in the short and long run

Policy on Attendance:

Class attendance is **mandatory** except for emergencies, which should be explained to me preferably *in advance* and *in writing*. Only those students with *excusable absences* will be allowed to do make up assignments. Note that frequent (*more than 2*) **unexplained absences** will reduce your overall graded by a letter grade (eg from B to C). More than **4 unexplained** absences invite an *"F" for the whole course*. Even when you have an excusable absence, it is your *responsibility to catch up with* what you missed during your absence. Note that frequent going in and out of class during class is disruptive and should be avoided., other wise it affects your attendance grade A short stretch break will be given at around 6:40

Disability Accommodation Policy:

"To receive academic accommodations for a disability, students must contact *Disability Resources* located in Benson 216. The phone numbers is 408 554 contact Disabilities office in good time, at any rate no later **than 6 PM Friday week 1** in order to ensure that you get the accommodations that you need in a timely and *meaningful manner*. See also *appendix 1 for Current SCU special accommodations policy as of December 2015*

Special note: since this class meets during late afternoon , it is advisable that you spare some time for your snack etc. **before class** rather **than during class** to avoid undue disruption in class. Water, juice, soft drinks OK in class

Policy on Personal Electronic Media In the class:

In the interest of collegiality and respect for class process , time and space, as well as respect for others in the class, their confidentiality and academic freedom, please make sure laptops , tablets , smart phones , pagers are turned off and ad out of sight during class (unless needed for a class activity) Inappropriate use of these devices undermine class in terms of academic confidentiality. They are also distracting to you and others and could lead to being marked absent even when you are physically present Students with special needs in this regards *should submit requisite forms requesting such accommodations in a timely manner no later than Friday week 1*

Class Procedures:

The course will be presented through a **combination of lectures and discussion** in order to achieve the stated goals: **Audiovisual material** where possible and applicable will also be used. Other learning activities, **including group discussions** will be used. Students **are encouraged to cultivate an inquiring mind, bold enough** to raise **appropriate** questions for discussion. However, this should be done with a spirit of **sensitivity and respect** for all involved in the learning situation. To this end, students are encouraged to cultivate **a spirit of collegiality and accountability to the whole class at all times to ensure success of the class. Students' initiative** in keeping *tuned in by reading around and beyond the assigned readings*, sharing information pertinent to

the course and a general sense of responsibility for the success of the class over and above the minimum *requirements of the class is highly encouraged and is self-rewarding.*

Connecting the dots

As indicated in the course goals, a major objective of the course is *to nurture awareness of complexities and depth of ethical issues facing humanity today. Overall, a major part of the goal is to create a context in and through which students can explore their own analytical responses to issues of ethical concern today and be able critically to analyze those attitudes in light of their examination of the ethical dimension of religion as a key aspect of human existence.* Students are expected *analytically to connect the dots between the text book analysis of Religion/ ethics and lived realities of our diverse and complex world.* Opportunities for such connection include the scheduled *response/reflection papers.* They also include *group project and written responses to these presentations.* In addition, many opportunities will provide themselves *through events on campus.* Look out for pertinent events and take maximum advantage of these and *tune in to what is being said and discussed in these events or around campus, "listening in with" RSOC 157 ears".* Attendance of pertinent events on campus accompanied by a written *2-3 page statement* showing the analytical connections you make between the event and the class content or goals or themes will boost your participation grade. Be creative and above all consider this *as your class both individually and collectively. Consider it a means to achieving the learning outcomes stated above as well as a means of achieving your own self defined learning outcomes.* Please note that *the extra credit will be added at my discretion* to the lowest grade that you will have at the end of the quarter as per the course requirements and will not exceed 5% of the total grade. Please note that participation in these campus *events is extra* and does not substitute scheduled class work. For details of some of these campus events, see Santa Clara University website. I will also draw your attention to pertinent events etc. for your consideration. You should also feel free to alert the class of any pertinent events that you might become aware of in due course.

Schedule of Class and Thematic outline

Note This could change to accommodate demographic changes, availability of resources and other contingencies :

Week 1: Mapping the Journey ahead: Introductory Theoretical Background:

Week 1

January 5th Mapping the Journey Ahead

- (a) Introduction to the course and its requirements
- (b) The idea of religion
- (c) The idea of critical thinking

All as Resource Persons

Assign Keeley: Asking the Right Questions: Chapters 1-3

(on Camino)

January 7th Ethics” some background Key ideas

- a) “idea of critical Thinking”
- b) The idea of religion
- c) Ethical systems: an Overview

Excerpts from Keely

Excerpts from Larry May Introduction: Pages 27-35

(Video Excerpts: Gandhi)

Week 2: Theoretical and Conceptual Background Continued
January 12th

Theoretical Background Continued : Some more key ideas

- a) Making Moral choices, and responding to moral Dilemmas: *The Principle of Double Effects.*
- b) Group and individual morality: *Occasion of evil & Cooperation with evil.*
- c) Making Moral choices: *The Role of the Conscience,*

Readings : Case Study from Stivers: Rigor and Responsibility

14th January :

- a) Religion and Ethical Reasoning; Distinguishing Between Religion, law and Morality
Case Study 1) Hindu Ethics:
(Reading Larry May : Pages 59-65)

Week 3: Back Ground of Choice concluded : Religion , Law and Ethical Reasoning continued

January 19th : Religion , Law and Ethical Reasoning concluded

- b) Religion and Ethics Case study 2 : Religion and the Cross-Cultural Legitimacy of Human Rights : Readings Larry May: Essays by Abdullahi, Ake or Ikeda
, Video :TBA

January 21st Gender , Religion and Human Rights In Contemporary Ethics

Readings: Larry May: Essay by Bunch: Women’s Rights as Human

Rights
Stivers Case?
Video: TBA
1st Response paper due

(Friday week 3 by 4:30 PM)

Week 4

January 26: Introducing Issues Surrounding Human life:

Ethical issues at the Genesis of life :Cross Cultural Perspectives

The Abortion Controversy:

Readings: Larry May: *Applied Ethics*: Part VIII (essays by

Noonan, Mary Warren Lafleur and Lipner

Stivers Case Studies : A Matter of Life and Death penalty &/or

How Many Children

Video: *Roe V Wade*

January 28th

Issues pertaining to the end of Life: Euthanasia , Letting Die and the Right to die

Readings : Excerpt Haring : Christian perspectives on Death and Dying (Excerpts
Will be placed on Camino Subject to available)

Larry May Essays : By Rachels, Battin and Wolf

Stivers Case Study :Keeping the Doors Open

Video: World Apart

Week 5 : Concerning Death and Dying Concluded/Issues of Human sexuality introduced

February 2nd Readings : From Larry May: Essay by Becker : Buddhist Views of Suicide and
Euthanasia

Stivers Case Study : **Death, Duty and Dignity**

Group 1: On Issues pertaining Life

February 4th : *Introducing Issues Of Human sexuality* :

- i. Defining *sexual ethics and its* Norms: Chastity,
Compassion, Justice
- ii. Human sexuality :Naming and Navigating the ethical
dilemmas: Case study
- iii. Gender Construction and Sexuality : Naming the Ethical
Issues

Readings: Larry May : Essay by Sally Haslanger

Video excerpts: The Masks we wear and/or Killing us softly

Week 6: Issues of Human sexuality Continued : Same Sex Relationships

February 9th Morality and Homosexual expressions of love

Readings : Genovese **Morality and Homo- sexual expressions of love(PDF** on Camino

Larry May: Rethinking Civil Unions and Same Sex
Relationships : Essays by Jordan and Sandler

Stivers Case Study: Mixed Blessings
Video: If these walls could talk/(subject to availability)

February 11th :Issues of Human sexuality concluded :

**Group 2 on Human sexuality
(video resource : God Loves Uganda)**

Midterm Distributed

Week 7: Introducing Global Issues: The Scandal of Extreme Poverty

February 16th : The ethical scandal of extreme poverty

Mapping and Defining the scandal of Poverty and its feminization :

Readings) Larry May: part IV: (essays by , Singer, Naverson
Wan- Ho)

Midterm/Learning Outcomes modalities discussed

February 18th : Global Issues Continued: Responding to the Ethical Scandal of Poverty:

Subverting Greed, Making Poverty History:

Readings:

Knitter: *Subverting Greed*: Introduction; chapters TBA (pdf)

Hinga essay: Becoming Better Samaritans : (On Camino)

Stivers Case Study Who cares about HAITI

Group 3 Presenting on Issues of extreme poverty

Week 8 Global Issues Continued: The Morality of War :

February 23rd The Just war Tradition and its alternatives:

Readings; Larry May: (Part V) Essays by Lackey

Stivers: Case Study: Vietnams Legacies :

(Video: Soldiers of Conscience)

February 25th : **Religions and the Nonviolent Path to Peace**

i) Subverting Hatred: The Challenge and Promise of Religion

Readings: Larry May: (essay by MLK :Letter from the Birmingham Jail

Smith Christopher: Subverting Hatred: Chapters : (TBA)

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Video: More of Gandhi or Equivalent: *eg As we forgive*)

**Group 4: Religion, War and the Quest for Just Peace /or (Possibly a Panel on
Trafficking as a Consequence of conflict : Case study from Africa (to be confirmed)**

Second Response paper due

Week 9 : Global Issues Continued: Human Responsibility to the Non Human World :

March 1st : The Ecological Crisis and its Multiple dimensions :

Readings: Larry May: Part III: Essays by Gregory Cayete and Shari Collins

Stivers Case Studies : Sustaining Dover and or Whose Water

Video: Inconvenient Truth, or Taking Root or **Blue Gold**

March 3rd : The Moral Responsibility to Non- Human World: Rights of Animals ,

Group 5 : On Human Responsibility to the Non Human World /Or guest speaker on ethics and animals

Readings: Excerpts Larry May: Essay By Jamieson

Excerpts From Wasserstrom On Animal Liberation (will be posted on Camino)
Video Resource Food Inc

Week 10: Course synthesis: Class Reflections on Religion and Ethics : The Quest for a Global Ethic:

March 8th Any unfinished Business from week 9

Class Reflections on Religion and Ethics Case study: Parliament of World Religions

March 10th Last day of Class Conclusions , course wrap up:

- a) Reviews and Revisions: Preparing **The Final paper**
- b) Course Wrap Up
- a) Students' Questions

Final Paper: Due Friday exam Week In my Mail Box on or before 4:30PM as well as on Camino :A Drop Box will be posted by Monday exam week :

Texts

- 1. Knitter et al: Subverting Greed***
- 2. Larry May et all: Applied Ethics a multicultural approach***
- 3. Christopher: Subverting Hatred***
- 4. Stivers , a case study approach***

(Recommended books for final essay review (see course requirements below) . Students will pick and review any one of the following books . Guidelines for review will be provided by end of week 2) (Sample list)

2. *Immaculee Ilibagiza: Left to Tell: Discovering God amidst the Rwandan Genocide*
3. *Uwem Akpam: Say You are One of them*
4. *Ngugi Wa Thiongo: Devil on the Cross*
5. *Ngugi Wa Thiongo: I Will Marry When I Want*
6. *Alice Walker: The Color Purple*
7. *Kidder: Mountains Beyond Mountains*
8. *Helena Prejean Dead Man Walking*

Decide by end of week 8 what book you want to read for your final and begin reading it

A Prompt for how to approach the book review will be posted on Camino by end of week 8.

APPENDIX 1
Syllabus Statements on Disabilities Resources,
Sexual Harassment and Discrimination (Title IX Resources),
and Reporting Requirements

September 2015

Disabilities Syllabus Statement

If you have a disability for which accommodations may be required in this class, please contact Disabilities Resources, Benson 216, www.scu.edu/disabilities as soon as possible to discuss your needs and register for accommodations with the University. If you have already arranged accommodations through Disabilities Resources, please discuss them with me during my office hours. Students who have medical needs related to pregnancy or parenting may be eligible for accommodations.

While I am happy to assist you, I am unable to provide accommodations until I have received verification from Disabilities Resources. The Disabilities Resources office will work with students and faculty to arrange proctored exams for students whose accommodations include double time for exams and/or assisted technology. (Students with approved accommodations of time-and-a-half should talk with me as soon as possible). Disabilities Resources must be contacted in advance to schedule proctored examinations or to arrange other accommodations. The Disabilities Resources office would be grateful for advance notice of at least two weeks. For more information you may contact Disabilities Resources at [408-554-4109](tel:408-554-4109).

Title IX Syllabus Statement

Santa Clara University upholds a zero tolerance policy for discrimination, harassment and sexual misconduct. If you (or someone you know) have experienced discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence or stalking, we encourage you to tell someone promptly. For more information, please go to www.scu.edu/studentlife and click on the link for the University's [Gender-Based Discrimination and Sexual Misconduct Policy](#) or contact the University's EEO and Title IX Coordinator, Belinda Guthrie at [408-554-3043](tel:408-554-3043) or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com

While I want you to feel comfortable coming to me with issues you may be struggling with or concerns you may be having, please be aware that there are some reporting requirements that are part of my job at Santa Clara University.

For example, if you inform me of an issue of harassment, sexual violence, or discrimination, I will keep the information as private as I can, but I am required to bring it to the attention of the institution's EEO and Title IX Coordinator. If you inform me that you are struggling with an issue that may be resulting in, or caused by, traumatic or unusual stress, I will likely inform the campus Student Care Team (SCU CARE).

If you would like to reach out directly to the Student Care Team for assistance, you can contact them at www.scu.edu/osl/report. If you would like to talk to the Office of EEO and Title IX directly, they can be reached at 408-554-3043 or by email at bguthrie@scu.edu. Reports may be submitted online through www.scu.edu/osl/report or anonymously through Ethicspoint: www.ethicspoint.com. Additionally, you can report incidents or complaints to the Office of Student Life (OSL), Campus Safety Services, and local law enforcement. For confidential support, contact the Counseling and Psychological Services office (CAPS), the YWCA, or a member of the clergy (for example, a priest or minister).

Finally, please be aware that if, for some reason, our interaction involves a disruptive behavior, a concern about your safety or the safety of others, or potential violation of University policy, I will inform the Office of Student Life. The purpose of this is to keep OSL apprised of incidents of concern, and to ensure that students can receive or stay connected to the academic support and student wellness services they need.

