RELG 470  *Theological Ethics*

W2021 TR 11:35–12:55
with RELG 685 *Research in Ethical Problems*
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**Aims & Objectives**

- historical: to explore selected sources of the Christian ethical tradition
- analytical: to compare their premises and methods with modern alternatives
- apologetic: to develop and defend the theological dimensions of moral judgment
- practical: to consider representative issues in personal and political ethics

**Required Resources**

- coursepack (purchase **hard copy** from Paragraph Books)
- designated sources for the term project (see below)
- John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth* (available in print or at Vatican.va)

**Recommended complementary reading**

- Michael Banner, *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*
- Servais Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*
  (reviewed at: https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2017/07/awkward-or-wise)

**Assignments & Evaluation**

**Participation (20 marks)**

- Measured by attendance, occasional quizzes, and seminar contributions.
- Attendance at all sessions is required.

**Final Exam (30 marks)**

- Preparation begins with the first session. Read the texts in advance. Highlight key statements and definitions. Take careful notes in class.
- Review before the exam, which will be a take-home comprising essay questions that will require knowledge both of the readings and of the lectures.

**Analysis of Veritatis Splendor (20 marks)**

- Do some background reading on the encyclical and the controversy around it.
- Consult the materials provided on MyCourses.
- Peruse the encyclical and make a careful outline of its main arguments. Pay close attention to its structure and the definitions its offers.
• Submit a 2000-word analysis of the encyclical based on the above.
• Be sure to cite section (not page) numbers when you refer to the encyclical, and to provide full bibliographic data for your secondary sources.
• Due 26 February; late submissions will be penalized one mark per diem.

Term Paper (30 marks)

• Choose one of the options below and prepare a research plan (5 marks). Submit the plan by 31 January.
• Begin conducting your research and prepare a paper of 3500-4000 words.
• Due 29 March; late submissions will be penalized one mark per diem.
• Assessment criteria: a) clarity of argument; b) competence in the literature; c) theological seriousness; d) quality of presentation and care in citation (NB: all citations must be to the pagination in the original source).

Option 1. Abortion

Task: To offer a theological account of Christianity’s objection to abortion. Resources you are required to study carefully and employ competently include:

- Peter Singer, Practical Ethics (2nd or 3rd ed.: ch. 1–2, 4, 6–7, 12)
- Journal of Medical Ethics 39.5 (May 2013), a collection of articles available at http://jme.bmj.com/content/39/5.toc
- at least one of the Planned Parenthood investigative videos available at http://www.centerformedicalprogress.org/cmp/investigative-footage/
- Samuel Wells and Ben Quash, Introducing Christian Ethics (chap. 11)
- Samuel Wells, Christian Ethics: A Reader (chap. 11)
- John Paul II, Evangelium vitae
- Michael Banner, Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems (ch. 2 and 3)

Additional resources selected at your own discretion. NB: Purchase of Singer and Banner is recommended, since close attention must be paid to their respective arguments.

Option 2. Suicide and Euthanasia

Task: To offer a theological account of Christianity’s understanding of compassion and of its objections to suicide and euthanasia. The following resources are to be studied and appropriately employed, together with additional resources selected at your discretion:

- Augustine, City of God, books 1 and 2
- Banner, Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems, chap. 2
- Catechism of the Catholic Church (see MyCourses)
- William Mattison, Introducing Moral Theology (chap. 18)
- Peter Singer, Practical Ethics (preface, ch. 1, 4, 7, 2 and appendix)
- Wesley Smith, Forced Exit and Culture of Death
• Samuel Wells and Ben Quash, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (chap. 11)
• Samuel Wells, *Christian Ethics: A Reader* (chap. 11)
• Declaration on Euthanasia
• coursepack resources such as *Dignitas Personae*

**Option 3. Virtue in Sex**

Task: To offer a theological account of the Christian concept of chastity. The following resources are to be studied and appropriately employed, with special attention paid to Pruss, purchase of which is recommended:

• Elizabeth Anscombe, “Contraception and Chastity”
• Augustine, *On Marriage and Concupiscence*
• M. Banner, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (ch. 8–9)
• John Paul II, *The Theology of the Body and Familiaris consortio*
• William Mattison, *Introducing Moral Theology* (ch. 15, 17)
• Paul VI, *Humanae vitae*
• Pius XI, *Casti connubii*
• Alexander Pruss, *One Body*
• Christopher Roberts, *Creation and Covenant*
• Carl Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self*
• Samuel Wells and Ben Quash, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (chap. 10)
• Samuel Wells, *Christian Ethics: A Reader* (chap. 10)

*For RELG 685 only*

• In lieu of the final exam, you may extend the term paper to c. 25 pages (60 marks).
• The topic of research and the due date will be negotiated with the instructor.

**Additional information**

• RELG 470 is an advanced seminar designed for U3 BTh (and BA Honours) students who have completed prior theological or philosophical training. If uncertain about your readiness for this course, consult the instructor.
• All students are advised that the course deals with topics that may be challenging or disturbing. The full range of academic freedom will be respected. No one is required, linguistically or otherwise, to adopt ideas or claims with which they disagree, though all are bound by the obligations of the syllabus.
• Notes should be taken by hand. Consultation is available after class or by appointment.
• McGill University values academic integrity. *Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures.* For more information, see ‘Keeping it Honest’: www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/
Course Outline

I. Introduction
   1. What is ‘ethics’?
   2. When is ethics theological?
   3. Is ethics still possible?

II. Modern Moral Philosophy
   4. The Ethics of Convenience
   5. The Ethics of Necessity
   6. The Ethics of Utility
   7. The Ethics of Assertion

III. The Groundwork of Christian Morality
   8. Covenantal Ethics
   9. Eucharistic Ethics
  10. Virtue Ethics
  11. Natural Law Ethics
  12. Evangelical Ethics

IV. Fallenness and Freedom
   13. The Trouble with Conscience
   14. Luther’s Gambit
   15. Ockham’s Error
   16. What Freedom is For
   17. How Freedom is Formed

V. Discerning Good and Evil
   18. in Speech
   19. in War
   20. in Work
   21. in Sex
   22. in Dominion
   23. in Death
   24. in Friendship
   25. in Citizenship

VI. Conclusion
   26. Happiness as the End of Man
Daily Readings and Study Materials

1. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*  
   Supplemental: Plato, *Republic*

2. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*  
   & Barth, *Church Dogmatics*  
   Supplemental: Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*

   Supplemental: MacIntyre, *After Virtue*

4. Hobbes, *De Cive*  
   & Hume, *Treatise on Human Nature*

5. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*  
   Supplemental: Banner, *Christian Ethics: A Brief History*  
   Notes on Kant

   & Mill, *Utilitarianism*  
   Notes on Utilitarianism

7. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*  
   Supplemental: Barth, *Church Dogmatics*

8. Exodus  
   & Matthew  
   & Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics*

9. Paul, 2 Corinthians  
   & Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*

10. Augustine, *On the Morals of the Catholic Church*  
    Supplemental: Ambrose, *The Duties of the Clergy*  
    Notes on Virtue

11. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*  
    Supplemental: O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order*

12. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*  
    Notes on Grace and Sin

    Notes on Conscience
14. Luther, *The Freedom of the Christian*
   Supplemental: Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*  
15. Mill, *On Liberty* 
   Supplemental: Pinckaers, *The Sources of Christian Ethics* 
16. Leo XIII, *On the Nature of Human Liberty* 
   Supplemental: O’Donovan, *Resurrection and Moral Order* 
17. John Paul II, *The Splendor of Truth* 
   Notes on the Morality of Acts 
18. Genesis 
   & Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*  
   Supplemental: Griffiths, *Lying* 
   Notes on Lying 
   Supplemental: Anscombe, ‘Mr Truman’s Degree’ 
   Notes on Just War 
20. Leo XIII, *Rerum Novarum*  
21. Anscombe, ‘Contraception and Chastity’ 
   Supplemental: Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* 
   Thirteen Theses 
22. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Dignitas Personae*  
23. Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* 
   & Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death* 
   & Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* 
25. Augustine, *City of God*  
26. Augustine, *On the Trinity*