

STMM 504 CHRISTIAN ETHICS
Spring 2007

Gary Chamberlain

Casey 225

Office Hours: M 10:00 a.m.-Noon; W 3:00-4:30 p.m.

Other times by appointment

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Purpose:

In this course we will focus upon the foundations and methods of Christian ethical reflection. In particular, we will examine the role of the person as moral agent in relation to the source and goal of all creation, God, the human community, and the natural world. Through our choices and decisions we shape who we are and what our world is. How do the Gospel and our Christian traditions shape our character, our decisions, and our communities? In understanding the processes of our own growth as personal, social, and ecological beings in love and cosmic intimacy with all reality we uncover the powers, forces, spirits that motivate us.

At the heart of the course lies our discussion of moral decision-making and character formation. Our search will involve us in examining our personal, social, cultural, and ecological decisions, in establishing criteria for fostering a world community which incarnates peace, justice and the integrity of creation, and in developing and assessing methodologies for the process of decision-making.

The conviction behind this examination is that in the midst of alienation, sin, and our complicity in furthering evil, we have first been loved and empowered by love to struggle against that alienation and restore wholeness and holiness in personal, social, and ecological relationships. Fundamentally, moral responses are religious responses and involve us in responsible action in the world.

Requirements:

1. Attendance and participation. 20%
2. Journal (not diary) of reflections, feelings, responses to readings, discussions, other events, etc. related to the course. At least 2 entries per week of 1 page each. NUMBER AND DATE EACH ENTRY. Collected periodically. Journal entries may also be sent by e-mail or fax. 20%
3. Thought paper on current moral issue, 3-4 pp., using and citing at least TWO JOURNAL ARTICLES on the issue. A summary and critical assessment of the articles, followed by a BRIEF personal reflection. Typed, double-spaced, authors and articles fully cited. Due for presentation April 18. 25%
4. Final paper or project on contemporary moral issue using principles, methods, and approaches developed in the course. Typed, double spaced; 6-7 pages. Must use at least four ADDITIONAL journal articles, book chapters, etc. May be in format of a homily or an "instruction" to local congregation, assembled pastors, classmates, etc. Oral presentation and final version due Wed., May 30. 35%

Readings:

A. Books:

1. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self.
2. Richard Gula, Reason Informed by Faith
3. David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, Catholic Social Thought
4. De Berri et al., Catholic Social Teaching: Our Best Kept Secret
5. J. Coleman and Wm. Ryan, eds, Globalization and Catholic Social Teachings

B. Articles: Packet

6. Edna McDonagh, "Introduction," from Doing the Truth
7. Beverly Harrison, "Keeping Faith in a Sexist Church," from Making Connections
8. Charles Curran, "A Methodological Overview of Fundamental Moral Theology"
9. Sharon Welch, A Feminist Ethic of Risk, chs. 4 and 5
10. Charles Curran, Margaret Farley, and Richard McCormick, S.J., eds., Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition (selected sections)
11. Other selected readings

NOTE: THE PACKET IS PURCHASED AT SU'S COPY CENTER.

Schedule:

1. March 28: **Introductions and Overview**
2. April 4: **Ethics as Autobiography; Context and Content; Sources; Foundations; Methods and Morals:**

Readings: H. R. Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, pp. 1-107

McDonagh, "Introduction"

Curran, "Methodological Overview"

3. April 11: **Responsibility and Challenge:**

Niebuhr (rest of text)

Harrison, "Keeping the Faith"

4. April 18: **Natural Law Tradition:** Gula, Parts 1 & 2; **papers due!**

5. April 25: **Natural Law continued:** Gula, Part 3

6. May 2: **Feminist Ethics:** Welch, chs. 4, 5;

Curran et al., Feminist Ethics..., chs. 2,3,7,9

7. May 9: **Feminist Ethics:** Curran et al., Feminist Ethics..., chs. 12,14,18,23,24

8. May 16: **Globalization:** Coleman, Globalization; O'Brien, Catholic Social Tradition, "Rerum Novarum," "Populorum Progressio," "Octagesima Adveniens"

9. May 23: **Globalization continued:** Coleman, Globalization (selections); O'Brien, CST, "Justice in the World," "Solicitudo Rei Socialis," "Centessimus Annus"

10. May 30: **Summary and presentations**

Grading: grading measures the quality of results in critical thinking, reflection, and expression.

In general all evaluations will be based on the following understandings:

A = Outstanding performance (not effort); well organized; clear, concise; sharp original analysis, well argued.

B = Good performance; usual grade for graduate course work; argument is clear, concise, organized but lacks the penetration, depth and originality of an "A" performance; analysis good but not strong.

C = Satisfactory performance; organization not strong; generally lacks clarity and purpose; more descriptive than analytical; general, too repetitive; unclear.