

STMM 504 CHRISTIAN ETHICS Spring 2006

Gary Chamberlain

Casey 225

Office Hours: M 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Other times by appointment

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April 1-2

April 28-30

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 April 28 and later. *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 28-30.** 25%
4. Final paper or project on contemporary moral issue using principles, methods, and approaches developed in the course. Typed, double spaced; 6-8 pages. Must use at least four ADDITIONAL journal articles, book chapters, etc. which we have not had as class assignments. May be in format of a homily or an "instruction" to local congregation, assembled pastors, classmates, etc. Final version due **June 5.** 35%

Readings:

A. For initial meeting, April 1-2:

1. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self, Preface, Introduction, Prologue [pp. 1-46], and up to p. 107 if possible.
2. *Edna McDonagh, "Introduction," from Doing the Truth
3. *Charles Curran, "A Methodological Overview of Fundamental Moral Theology"
4. *Beverly Harrison, "Keeping Faith in a Sexist Church," from Making

Connections

B. For weekend of April 28-30:

1. Niebuhr, The Responsible Self (rest of text)
2. Richard Gula, Reason Informed by Faith (entire)
3. *Sharon Welch, A Feminist Ethic of Risk, chs. 4 and 5
4. *Charles Curran, Margaret Farley, and Richard McCormick, S.J., eds., Feminist Ethics and the Catholic Moral Tradition (selected sections)
4. John Coleman and Wm. Ryan, Globalization and Catholic Social Teaching (selections)
6. O'Brien and Shannon, Catholic Social Thought (selections)
7. Henriot et al., eds. Catholic Social Teaching (selections)
8. *Daniel Maguire, "Ethics: How to Do It," from Death by Choice
*Available at SU Print Shop.

NOTE: there will be an ethically just charge for handouts

Texts:

H. Richard Niebuhr, The Responsible Self
Richard Gula, Reason Informed by Faith
John Coleman and Wm. Ryan, Globalization and Catholic Social Thought
David O'Brien and Thomas Shannon, Catholic Social Thought
Peter Henriot, et. al, Catholic Social Teaching
Other selected readings listed below.*

Schedule:

1. April 1-2: **Introductions and Overview; 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"

*Beverly Harrison, "Keeping Faith in a Sexist Church," from Making Connections

2. April 28-30: **Responsibility and Challenge; Natural Law Tradition; Feminist Ethics; Catholic Social Teachings**

Readings: Niebuhr (rest of text)

Gula, Reason Informed by Faith [most of text]

*Welch, chs. 4, 5

*Curran et al., Feminist Ethics..., chs. 2,3,4,7,9,12,14,18,23,24

*Daniel Maguire, “Ethics: How to Do It,” from Death by Choice

Globalization: O’Brien, Catholic Social Thought, “Rerum Novarum,” “Populorum Progressio,” “Octagesimo Adveniens,” “Centessimus Annus” with corresponding Sections in Henriot, Catholic Social Teaching.

Coleman and Ryan, Globalization and Catholic Social Thought [selections]

Thought Papers on current moral issues due! Presented and handed in.

3. Final paper: **Hard copy due by June 5.**

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.