

MPTH 531: Moral Theology I Syllabus
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OUTCOMES: by the end of the course, the successful participant will:

- Explain Narrative Ethics from a Catholic perspective
- Examine unity and diversity within Roman Catholic moral theology
- Negotiate the tension between universal and necessary moral principles (or formulae) and specific, situational, contingent pastoral moral theology practices
- apply Catholic Moral Theology to a specific situation.

REQUIRED READINGS: as indicated in each unit. Please study the selections prior to that class, with notes taken, questions and initial comments ready.

GRADING: for written work and contributions to our discussions you will be assessed as follows:

- 20% Clarity: organization, grammar, syntax, & spelling
- 35% Accuracy: in using the sources in moral theology that you bring to bear on the case
- 45% Substance: probe deeply into the issue, invest your own best thinking into it

SESSIONS 1 & 2: January 14-15

Introduction: what is the locus of moral decision making?

UNIT I: Narrative Ethics

read Andre Dubus, *A Father's Story*

<http://abctheology.pbworks.com/f/FathersStory.pdf>

read: Alasdair McIntyre, *Beyond Virtue* postscript to the 2nd edition

read: Mt. 21:28ff and Lk. 7:36ff

We will discuss:

- what are the moral questions at play in the story?
- What are the meta-moral questions are suggested?
- SCHPREG: what sorts of elements do we presume?
- Paul Ricoeur: hermeneutic circle
- Alasdair McIntyre: source/tradition/practice
- parables: Mt. 21:28ff, Lk. 7:36ff
- Biblical Ethics: what makes our morality unique?
- James Gustafson, Stanley Hauerwas

Assessment: Explain the eidetic reduction of Narrative Ethics from a Catholic perspective

UNIT II: Apologists, Nicaeans, Catholics, Scholastics

read Pinckaers, ch.s I-IV & Aquinas: *Summa Theologicae* I.II.63-66, 90-94
www.newadvent.org (then go to “summa”).

We will discuss:

- Pagan Antecedents: Epicureanism, Stoicism (Neo-)Platonism, Aristotle
- St. Paul’s Letter to the Romans On Law & Freedom
- Apologists: Origen, Tertullian On Martyrdom & War
- Roman Catholicism: Ambrose The Ambrose Doctrine
- Augustine On Grace & Free Will
- Aquinas: Natural Law & Virtues Ethic On Faith & Reason
- Dante: narrative meets scholastics On Virgil and Beatrice
- Luther’s Secular Descendants: Hume, Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche
- Contemporary Alternatives: feminism, liberationism, extensionism

Assessment: How can we avoid the “either-or” trap between universal and necessary moral principles (or formulae) and specific, situational, contingent morality?

Feb. 11-12

UNIT III: Meta-Ethical claims

read Pinckaers, ch.s V-VIII

We will discuss:

- Moral Theology and the Magisterium
- Is there Universal Moral Truth?
- What does faith add to reason or reason to faith?
- Meta-Moral Spirituality

Assessment: Why haven’t we yet nailed down THE Roman Catholic moral theology?

UNIT IV: Applied Ethics

We will discuss:

- What are the specific issues?
- What else do we need to know about a given situation?
- What other resources do we need (e.g. science)?
- What ethical principles apply?
- What is the relationship between Magisterial teaching and moral theology?
- Are there reasonable objections to the teaching?
- What conclusions apply to all people, everywhere?

A. Sexual Ethics

read the *Catechism of the Catholic Church, Part 3, Section 1 Section 2, Ch.2*

http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_INDEX.HTM

B. Environmental Ethics

read Pope Benedict XVI: *Caritas in Veritate* intro. & ch. 4
www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate_en.html

Assessment: select a specific moral situation, either in sexual ethics or environmental ethics, and apply the questions above to it. Add this final question: What will you say to this person in this specific moral situation?