Religious Ethics explores fundamental moral sources and methods through comparative consideration of two or more major religious traditions. In doing so, it explores moral issues faced by individuals and communities from comparative theological perspectives, being particularly mindful of how the economic, political, and cultural structures in a religiously plural world affect those issues. The course will investigate shared areas of ethical concern that span the globe (e.g. globalization, poverty, human rights, church-state relations, economic justice, ecological degradation, health and health care inequities, war and peace).

Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will explore and compare the ethical understandings of and at least one at least two major religious traditions. With respect to each tradition, students will learn about the foundational sources, doctrines and questions that guide its ethical thinking. Topics may include foundational assumptions about the purpose of human life, the nature of the human person and the human community, and our relation to God or ultimate reality. Students will note how these basic understandings impact how each religious tradition frames ethical questions.

This course will also expose students to the central themes and understandings of at least two religious traditions. We will learn about basic sources and doctrines that underlie the moral and ethical reasoning in these diverse religious traditions and we will observe similarities and differences in the kinds of questions that are seen as important within the context of distinct religious traditions.

The course will ask students to think about what constitutes an ethical problem; to read and understand various approaches to resolving particular ethical problems; and to formulate and clearly articulate views on select ethical issues. Students will learn basic ethical concepts and theories, such as deontological and teleological approaches, natural law, and virtue theories.

Students will concretize their understanding of ethical theories, and of the ethical approaches of the relevant religious traditions, through investigation of one or more pressing issues of the day (individual syllabi may specify: ecology, immigration, poverty, medical ethics, war and peace, sexuality, etc.) Students will formulate and clearly articulate views on select ethical issues, through discussion, papers, and examinations.
Students will hone critical thinking skills through reading, writing, and discussion. Class discussions will help to identify various dimensions of complex ethical issues and help students clarify their thinking in dialogue with one another and with the instructor.

Students will enhance their understanding of justice by considering public policy dimensions of these issues and their own role in bringing about justice through choices about voting, activism, lifestyle, and consumption patterns.

Core Curriculum

Knowledge Areas satisfied: Ethics Knowledge
Skills Developed: Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions, Ethical Awareness and Decision-Making Skills
Values Requirement satisfied: Understanding & Promoting Justice

Course Requirements

*Note: While individual instructors may vary in their assignments and weighting, expected course requirements will always include:

1. exams and written assignments (some with essay components) that assess the skill, value, and knowledge outcomes noted above
2. examinations and other assignments that assess student completion of, and level of engagement with, assigned readings and comprehension of the material covered in lectures, discussions and readings
3. Participation (accessed via quizzes, short in-class writing assignments, small group projects, individual presentations, etc.)

Course Style

Lectures/presentations and class discussions will be the principal activity styles.
Grading

*Note: Individual instructors may provide their own grading scale and an explanation of the meaning of each letter grade.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>100-94%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>93-91%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>90-88%</td>
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<td>B</td>
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<td>B-</td>
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<td>C+</td>
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<td>D+</td>
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<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>59-0%</td>
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</tbody>
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Consultation

I welcome the opportunity to meet you and talk with you outside of class time. You may see me without an appointment during my office hours or you may arrange an appointment by seeing me before or after class or contacting me by e-mail.

Core Assessment

This course will have a compulsory Core assessment component. The data collected will not be reported for individual students but used as a collective unit to inform us of how well students are performing compared with other LUC students.

Students with Disabilities

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact me and also contact Services for Students with Disabilities (Sullivan Center Suite 260) as soon as possible to arrange appropriate accommodations.

Academic Integrity

A basic mission of a university is to search for and to communicate the truth. A genuine learning community cannot exist unless this demanding standard is a fundamental tenet of the intellectual life of the community. Students of Loyola University Chicago are expected to know, to respect, and to practice this standard of personal honesty.

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to: cheating, helping another student to cheat, plagiarism, turning in the same paper for two different courses (including those in two different semesters), purchasing papers written by others, manipulating attendance records, and falsifying medical or other documents to petition for excused absences or extensions of deadlines.

For an extensive but not exhaustive list of activities that constitute academic dishonesty, see the University’s Academic Integrity Policy:
http://www.luc.edu/academics/catalog/undergrad/reg_academicintegrity.shtml

Any form of academic dishonesty whatsoever will result, at a minimum, in an F for the assignment in question; this is University policy. It may result in an F for the course or, in extreme cases, expulsion.

Possible Readings Include:

*Note: Instructors may include one or more of the following texts as “required” and one or more others as “recommended.” Instructors may also include other texts and readings as they deem appropriate to the specific topics and issues addressed in a given course. What follows are suggestions of readings and course schedules.
Texts in Comparative Religious Ethics and/or Various Religious Traditions:


Vardit Rispler-Chaim *Islamic Medical Ethics in the Twentieth Century* (Brill, 1993).


Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, *To Heal a Fractured World* (Schocken, 2007)


Textbooks addressing both Roman Catholic and Protestant approaches to Christian ethics:


Miguel De La Torre, *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* (Orbis, 2004)


**Works primarily on the Roman Catholic moral tradition:**


Week 1  Diverse Religious Traditions on Compassion and Aggression  
Sources: *Bhagavad Gītā* and the Teachings of the Buddha: Hinduism and Buddhism

Week 2  Sources: The Hebrew Bible, and the Gospel of Matthew: Judaism and Christianity

Week 3  Sources: The Koran and Muslim Ethics

Week 4  Stoic Greek Natural Law vision of humanity as participants in a Cosmopolis, a universal community

Week 5  The Origins of Evil (accounts of aggression) in many religious traditions

Week 6  Appealing to God or the Gods to justify aggression: The dynamism of appeals to Holy War and Crusaderism

Week 7  Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Voices  
Gandhi and the Indian Independence Movement

Week 8  Gandhi and the critique of Colonialism: the practices of nonviolent resistance

Weeks 9  Ongoing tensions between Hindus and Muslims in India and between India and Pakistan—the legacies of the Partition

Weeks 10  Martin Luther King, Jr. and Christian appeals for civil rights

Week 11  Martin Luther King, Jr and his appeal to the Hebrew Bible’s Exodus Story

Week 12  The Dalai Lama and Engaged Buddhist Ethics

Week 13  The Dalai Lama and The Occupation of Tibet

Week 14  Currents in Muslim Ethics: Islam and Ecology
SCHEDULE – Model Two for Theo 186
Religious Ethics: Bioethics, Health, and Healthcare—Jewish and Christian Ethical Perspectives

Week 1
Introduction to Jewish Ethics

Week 2
Hebrew Bible and the Rabbinical Traditions: Main ethical themes/methods

Week 3
Sources: Reason, Experience & the Sciences

Week 4
Introduction to Christian Ethics (Sources & Methods)

Weeks 5-6
Sources: The Bible & Christian Traditions

Week 7
Virtues in Jewish and Christian Thinking

Week 8
Natural Law & Human Rights Discourse in Comparative Perspective

Week 9
Christian Thought on the Common Good, Liberation Ethics

Week 10
Does ANY Religion have a place in Bioethics? – History & Context

Week 11
Prenatal Genetic Testing & Artificial Reproductive Technologies in Comparative Perspective

Week 12
Embryonic Stem Cell Research in Comparative Perspective

Week 13
Global Health/Healthcare Inequities in Comparative Perspective

Week 14
End of Life Care & Human Mortality in Comparative Perspective

Week 15
Bioethics, Faith, & Moral Imagination: Possibilities & Promise
Appendix: Grading Rationales
Students often ask how letter grades are awarded, and what the criteria for various letter grades are. The following is an attempt to answer that question.

“**A**” work represents superior work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that the assignment has been fulfilled with care, intelligence, and genuine insight. The written work displays a clear focus and method of approach, uses pertinent examples or "facts" to support its judgments, shows a distinct personal perspective which can be distinguished from others, makes a real argument, and can discern the strengths and weaknesses of other arguments. A work also displays spelling, punctuation, grammar, word usage, and syntax that is of high quality. On examinations, A work is demonstrated by an accurate and insightful knowledge of the material in question, judicious choices in the material used in essay questions, and clarity of expression.

“**B**” work represents very good work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that the assignment has been fulfilled with care and intelligence. The written work displays a fairly clear focus and uses good examples. In general, B work also displays the lack of technical errors described for A work. On exams, B work is shown by a solid knowledge of the material involved, good choices used in essay questions, and clear expression.

Often students ask what distinguishes B or B+ work from A work. The main difference is the distinctiveness, imagination, and ability to see the larger picture with intelligence and insight on the part of A work. A paper that follows the assignment exactly and does it well may well merit a B or B+ grade because it is very good, but it may not be superior if it does not include these further elements.

“**C**” work is satisfactory work. In the case of writing assignments and papers, this means that there is a basic, but not extensive, understanding of the assignment. Work will generally not demonstrate a clear focus (e.g., the paper may wander-around) or method of approach, but there is some attempt to do so. Its use of material to support judgments is adequate and will show some awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of other positions. C work demonstrates that there is sufficient knowledge of the material, but that there remain some deficiencies in understanding and expression. In exams, C work shows an adequate (but not more than adequate) knowledge of the material and on essay questions will show the same characteristics listed above for written work. C work often displays a poor technical grasp of the conventions of writing (spelling, punctuation, etc.) and often lacks good organization.

“**D**” work is barely passing work. It is generally unsatisfactory but demonstrates a bare minimum of knowledge of the subject matter. There is little to no awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of other positions, little to no organization, and poor use of technical conventions. What saves D work from failure is a barely adequate grasp of the material.

“**F**” work does not meet any of the criteria listed above.