

LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO
Department of Theology
Christian Ethic Syllabus Template¹

Introduction to Christian Ethics

Building, Room #, Days and Times:

Instructor's Name:

Office Hours:

Contact Info./E-mail:

Course Description

Introduction to Christian Ethics is a core course that explores the major sources, methods, and insights of Christian social and theological ethics. Particular attention is given to Roman Catholic thought. The course will concentrate on the foundational sources in Christian ethics and examine the moral significance of major theological themes and affirmations. It will show how these foundational sources and themes guide ethical understanding concretely by examining one or more pressing issues of the day (e.g. ecology, immigration, poverty, medical ethics, among others).

Learning Objectives

This course will expose students to some of the *central theological themes and affirmations* of the Christian tradition, such as understandings of the God-human relationship, the nature of the human person, creation, sin, and salvation. We will see how various theological commitments contribute to Christian ethical reasoning about contemporary moral problems in their personal and social dimensions.

The course will ask students to think about what constitutes an ethical problem. Students will learn *basic ethical concepts and theories*, such as deontological and teleological approaches, natural law, and virtue theories.

Students will identify **the major sources of Christian ethics** (Scripture, Church tradition, philosophy, the social and human sciences, and human experience), and gain practice in identifying how different thinkers use, interpret, and prioritize these sources. Students will think critically about how to interpret each source, how the sources interrelate, and which sources take priority when they conflict.

¹ Following revisions to the Theology and Ethics Core completed in Spring 2010 by the Theology Department, and subsequently approved by the University Core Curriculum Committee (UCCCC), Introduction to Christian Ethics became one of two options offered by the Theology Department that count for core ethics credit. Students may take either this course or Introduction to Religious Ethics. This model syllabus was approved by the Undergraduate Programs Committee (UPC) of the Department of Theology on February 28, 2011 and submitted to the UCCCC as an example of the content and shape for this foundational course in Christian ethics. **This syllabus was approved by the UCCC in April 2011.**

Students will concretize their understanding of *ethical theories*, of foundational themes in Christian ethics, and of the sources of Christian ethics 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 be exposed to biblical texts, classic texts from the history of Christian thought, and contemporary essays on several key issues in Christian ethics.

Students will hone *critical thinking skills* through reading, writing, and discussion. Students will be asked to demonstrate their understanding and critical engagement through written assignments. 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.

In All: By taking this course, students will have gained skills and understanding in five distinct areas:

1. Use of moral deliberation to clarify and develop one's critical thinking
2. Nuanced moral argumentation
3. Attentive listening to the viewpoints and experiences of others
4. Appreciation of the complexities of specific ethical topics/issues addressed
5. Introductory awareness of theological responses to these issues

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.

A	100-94%	B-	83-81%	D+	69-67%
A-	93-91%	C+	80-78%	D	66-60%
B+	90-88%	C	77-73%		
B	87-84%	C-	72-70%	F	59-0%

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

Please note that 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.

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

David Ahearn and Peter Gathje, eds., *Doing Right and Being Good: Catholic and Protestant Readings in Christian Ethics* (Michael Glazier, 2005).

Dorothy C. Bass, ed., *Practicing our Faith: A Way of Life for a Searching People*, 2nd. Ed. (Jossey-Bass, 2010)

Lois K. Daley, ed., *Feminist Theological Ethics: A Reader* (Presbyterian Publishing, 1994).

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

M. Therese Lysaught and Joseph Kotva ed., *On Moral Medicine: Theological Explorations in Medical Ethics*, 3rd ed. (Eerdmans, 2011).

Samuel Wells, *Christian Ethics: An Introductory Reader* (Wiley Blackwell, 2010)

Samuel Wells and Ben Quash, *Introducing Christian Ethics* (Wiley Blackwell, 2010)

J. Philip Wogaman, *Christian Ethics: A Historical Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Westminster John Knox, 2011)

J. Philip Wogaman, Douglas M. Strong, eds., *Readings in Christian Ethics: A Historical Sourcebook* (Westminster John Knox, 1996)

Works primarily on the Roman Catholic moral tradition:

James Bretzke, *A Morally Complex World* (Michael Glazier, 2004)

Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Theological Bioethics: Participation, Justice, Change* (Georgetown University Press, 2005)

Richard Gula, *Reason Informed By Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (Paulist Press, 1989)

Richard Gula, *Moral Discernment* (Paulist Press, 1997)

David Matzko McCarthy, ed., *The Heart of Catholic Social Teaching: Its Origins and Contemporary Significance* (Brazos Press, 2009)

David Matzko McCarthy and M. Therese Lysaught, eds., *Gathered for the Journey: Moral Theology in Catholic Perspective* (Eerdmans, 2007)

SCHEDULE – Model One: Catholic Social Thought

- Week 1:** Introduction to Catholic Social Thought
- Week 2:** Sources of CST: The Bible and Liturgy
- Week 3:** Sources of CST: Reason and Experience
- Week 4:** The Common Good: *Rerum Novarum*
- Week 5:** Subsidiarity and Socialization: *Quadragesimo Anno; Mater et Magistra*
- Week 6:** Human Rights: *Pacem in Terris*
- Week 7:** The Church/World Question: *Gaudium et Spes*
- Week 8:** Human Work: *Laborem Exercens*
- Week 9:** The Option for the Poor and Structural Sin: Liberation Theology and John Paul II
- Week 10:** Solidarity: *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*
- Week 11:** The Ethics of Migration
- Week 12:** Ecological Ethics
- Week 13:** The Ethics of Food
- Week 14:** The Future of Catholic Social Thought

SCHEDULE – Model Two: The Ethics of Food Systems

- Week 1:** Introduction to Christian Ethics, the Four Sources
- Week 2:** How to identify an ethical issue: An Introduction to Food Systems
- Week 3:** Scripture: Exodus and the Ethics of Labor
- Week 4:** Scripture: Genesis and Ecological Ethics
- Week 5:** Scripture: Jesus and Hospitality to the Stranger
- Week 6:** Reason: Natural Law and Human Rights
- Week 7:** Reason: Catholic social thought
- Week 8:** Reason: The Common Good and the Economics of Food Systems
- Week 9:** Reason: Subsidiarity and Socialization: The Role of the State in Food Systems
- Week 10:** Experience: Liberation Theology and Structural Sin in Food Systems
- Week 11:** Experience: Liberation Theology and the Option for the Poor in Public Health
- Week 12:** Tradition: The Eucharist as a Practice of Social Justice
- Week 13:** Tradition: Fasting for Justice
- Week 14:** Integrating the Sources

SCHEDULE – Model Three: Bioethics, Health, and Healthcare

- Week 1:** Introduction to Christian Ethics (Sources & Methods)
- Week 2:** Sources: The Bible & Christian Traditions
- Week 3:** Sources: Reason, Experience & the Sciences
- Week 4:** Virtue Ethics in Aristotle, Aquinas, & Luther
- Week 5:** Deontology, Consequentialism, & Teleology
- Week 6:** Natural Law Theory & Human Rights Discourse
- Week 7:** The Common Good, Liberation Theologies/Ethics
- Week 8:** Does Theology have a place in Bioethics? – History & Context
- Week 9:** Prenatal Genetic Testing & Artificial Reproductive Technologies
- Week 10:** Embryonic Stem Cell Research
- Week 11:** U.S. Health/Healthcare Inequities
- Week 12:** Global Health/Healthcare Inequities
- Week 13:** End of Life Care & Human Mortality
- Week 14:** 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.