

**LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO**  
**Department of Theology**  
**Religious Ethics Syllabus Template**

**Building, Room #, Days and Times:**

**Instructor's Name:**

**Office Hours:**

**Contact Info./E-mail:**

**Course Description**

**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.

	<b>Core Curriculum</b>
<b>Knowledge Areas satisfied:</b>	Ethics Knowledge
<b>Skills Developed:</b>	Critical Thinking Skills and Dispositions, Ethical Awareness and Decision-Making Skills
<b>Values Requirement satisfied:</b>	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](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:**

Rachel Adler, *Engendering Judaism: An Inclusive Theology and Ethics* (Beacon Press, 1999).

Kecia Ali, *Sexual Ethics and Islam: Feminist Reflections on Qur'an Hadith and Jurisprudence*, (Oneworld, 2006).

John Brockopp ed. *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion War and Euthanasia* 2006 (University of South Carolina Press, 2003).

S. Cromwell Crawford, *Hindu Bioethics for the Twenty-First Century* (State University of New York Press, 2003).

S. Cromwell Crawford, *Dilemmas of Life and Death: Hindu Ethics in a North American Context* (State University of New York Press, 1995).

Darrell Fasching and Dell DeChant, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A Narrative Approach* (Wiley Blackwell, 2001).

Christine Gudorf and Regina Wolfe, *Ethics and World Religions: Cross-Cultural Case Studies* (Orbis Books, 1999).

Sohail Hashmi ed. *Islamic Political Ethics: Civil Society, Pluralism, and Conflict* (Princeton, 2002).

Saral Jhingran, *Aspects of Hindu Morality* (Motilal Banarsidass, 1999).

Aaron Mackler, *An Introduction to Jewish and Catholic Bioethics: A Comparative Analysis* (Georgetown University Press, 2003).

Charles Mathewes, *Understanding Religious Ethics* (Wiley Blackwell, 2010)

Irene, Oh. *The Rights of God: Islam, Human Rights, and Comparative Ethics*, (Georgetown University Press, 2007).

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

Amy B. Sajo *Muslim Ethics: Emerging Vistas* (I. B. Taurus, 2004).

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

Laurie Zoloth, *Health care and the Ethics of Encounter: A Jewish Discussion of Social Justice* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1999).

### **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*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. 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*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Eerdmans, 2012).

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*, 2<sup>nd</sup> 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 for Theo 186**  
**Religious Ethics: Compassion and Aggression**

- 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**

<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to Jewish Ethics
<b>Week 2</b>	Hebrew Bible and the Rabbinical Traditions: Main ethical themes/methods
<b>Week 3</b>	Sources: Reason, Experience & the Sciences
<b>Week 4</b>	Introduction to Christian Ethics (Sources & Methods)
<b>Weeks 5-6</b>	Sources: The Bible & Christian Traditions
<b>Week 7</b>	Virtues in Jewish and Christian Thinking
<b>Week 8</b>	Natural Law & Human Rights Discourse in Comparative Perspective
<b>Week 9</b>	Christian Thought on the Common Good, Liberation Ethics
<b>Week 10</b>	Does ANY Religion have a place in Bioethics? – History & Context
<b>Week 11</b>	Prenatal Genetic Testing & Artificial Reproductive Technologies in Comparative Perspective
<b>Week 12</b>	Embryonic Stem Cell Research in Comparative Perspective
<b>Week 13</b>	Global Health/Healthcare Inequities in Comparative Perspective
<b>Week 14</b>	End of Life Care & Human Mortality in Comparative Perspective
<b>Week 15</b>	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.