Syllabus – Phil 2314 – DL01 – Ethics

Fall 2015 – Tues 5:30-8:15pm – August 25 - December 8, 2015.

Prof.: James Capehart, MA (PhD Candidate, University of St. Thomas)
Phone: cell (530) 613-1302 (Please leave a message on my voicemail if I do not answer. I will gladly call you back when I am able.
Email: capehaj@stthom.edu
Office Hours: I am happy to meet with you before or after class if you need to speak. For those that are able to make it in to the UST main campus, I am there Monday through Saturday, and would gladly set up an appointment to meet. Given that this is a satellite class, if neither of those option work, I would be happy to speak over the phone or even set up a Skype meeting. I also come in to the UST library on Saturdays to do research. That is also a good meeting time, but please contact me ahead of time so I know if you are coming.

Required Texts:
- Known from the Things That Are, by Martin O’Keefe, SJ. (Main Text)
- Summa of the Summa, edited and annotated by Peter Kreeft.
- Also, I will either post on Blackboard or hand out supplemental texts for additional reading and discussion.
- Also, for texts from St. Thomas that are not in the Kreeft book, a good place to look is at the Eastern province Dominican House of Studies website, under the “Thomas Aquinas in English” link. Or just click here: http://www.dhspriory.org/thomas/

Grading:
- Test 1 (Tuesday, September 22) – 20%
- Test 2 (Tuesday, November 3) – 20%
- Bi-Weekly Assignments – 10% (Due every two weeks on Tuesday at class time. More on that below.)
- Term Paper (Due Tuesday, December 1) – 10%
- Participation – 10%
- Final Exam (After December 8, TBA but it is probably December 15) – 30%

Course Goals:
The primary goals of this course are to introduce the student to philosophy as a discipline of critical reasoning, and building upon the principles established in the previous Philosophy of Human Person course, to discover a Moral Philosophy which is rooted in the dignity of the human person as created by God the First Cause and as ordered to God as Ultimate End. As Immanuel Kant once said, a person is an end in itself and never a means to an end. Here we will show what Kant did not adequately do: that while correct, his position is rationally defensible based upon objectively known reality. A case for objectively based ethics can be (and will be) established on the basis of an observation of nature, especially of human nature. This is an ethics which is not merely subjective, but rather gives
grounding to many of our own deepest intuitions: Why are slavery, genocide, rape, always wrong? These are the kinds of acts which violate human nature and human dignity, and which frustrate even the agent’s own attainment of the Ultimate End. In this course we will come to understand how this case is made and how other actions can be judged in light of human nature, dignity, and our shared Ultimate End. Furthermore, while the conclusions I will put forward will be in conformity with the teachings of the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, they will be based upon principles knowable to anyone, believer or non-believer, Christian or non-Christian alike. Lastly, our secondary goals are to develop the ability to read in a philosophical way, to improve expository writing skills, and to enhance our ability to make complex, rational arguments.

Means of Assessing Student Achievement:

**Two one-hour exams**, each worth 20% of the total course grade (40% combined), will emphasize essay questions and short answer; study guides will be handed out for each exam. **The exam schedule may be changed with sufficient notice to the students.** Only one make-up exam is allowed, and only for a sufficient reason beyond the student’s control. It must be requested and taken within one week of the missed exam; there must be at least 24 hours between the request and the originally scheduled exam time. It is extremely difficult to make up exams in a setting like this. If a test is re-scheduled because of an extenuating circumstance and then that re-take is missed I will be forced to mark that as a “0”.

**A cumulative final exam**, based on all previous study guides plus one for any new material, will be worth 30% of the total course grade. **FINAL EXAMS MUST BE TAKEN AT THE SCHEDULED TIME.** (After December 8, 2015, but still TBA. It will probably be at our normally scheduled time on December 15.)

Term Paper:
For 10% of your grade I am assigning a **4-6 page term paper** which is due on the first class after Thanksgiving break, Tuesday, December 1, 2015, which is also the last normal class day of the semester. For the topic, I would like you to write a paper on St. Thomas’ explanation of the general characteristics of law, and the types of law. Also, please address how the different types of law are interconnected, especially on how human law is established. Also, please address the question, “Is the purpose of law to make human beings good?” (Cfr. O’Keefe, pp. 143-170, and *Summa theologiae* I-II, qq. 90-96.) Also, the paper should be double spaced, Times New Roman 12 font, and follow the Chicago Manual of Style format for footnotes.

Bi-Weekly Assignments:
For another 10% of your grade I am assigning 5 bi-weekly assignments of about 1½ pages (typed-double spaced), each worth 20 pts (yes, for a total of 100 pts). This assignment will be to type up your personal notes explaining what we discussed in class for those previous 2 weeks. It is **not** a cutting and pasting exercise from the class notes that I may provide for you. I want to see that you are
taking personal notes in class (either by hand or on computer, whatever works for
you) and that you are, on a weekly basis, attempting to assimilate the material. So,
what I am asking of you is this: I would like for you to type up in your own
words, print, and turn in, a summary of what we discussed in class for the two
previous classes of a two week period. It will be due on the following Tuesday at
class time. You may email it to me as well. Please see the Class Calendar for the
specific due dates.

Attendance and Participation:
One absence will result in a loss of 10 participation points. A second absence will
cut the participation grade by 20 points. Third absence – Drop the course. Please
see me if there are any extenuating circumstances. Participation can also be
helped or hurt by one’s participation in class discussion.

Student Conduct:
Conduct which disrupts or impedes the class will not be tolerated. Academic
dishonesty as described in the University Catalog and the Student Handbook will
result in the severest penalties.

Grading System:
100-93 = A, 92-90 = A-, exceptional; 89-87 = B+, 86-83 = B, 82-80 = B-, above
average; 79-77 = C+, 76-73 = C, 72-70 = C-, average; 69-65 = D+, 64-60 = D,
below average; 59-00 = F, inadequate.

Limits of This Syllabus:
This syllabus is not a formal contract. Its elements are subject to change for good
cause and with proper notice. However, I will do my very best to keep on track
and to inform you well in advance of any necessary changes. Most of all, the
supplemental reading list will probably change on the fly (usually in your favor,
as I may cut things if I see we are behind.)

Dates of Importance:
Tuesday, October 13 – No Class/Mid Semester Break. Tuesday, December 1 –
Last regular class day and Term Paper Due. Tuesday, December 8 – Fall Study
Day-no classes. Final Exam – Again, I will keep you posted, but it looks like
December 15.

Class Calendar:
See attached Excel Spreadsheet.