Contemporary Moral Issues
Course Syllabus

Semester: Fall 2016
Instructor: Jenny McConnell
Course: CU 2212 Contemporary Moral Questions
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Room: Beaumont
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Class Time: Saturdays, August 13, 20 & 27*; Sept. 10
(classes are from 9-4pm except *August 27 will be from 1-4pm)

Course Description:
The course examines Catholic positions on some of the most controversial ethical issues of our day: abortion, birth control, the relation between official Catholic teachings and individual conscience, reproductive technologies, cloning, stem-cell research, physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia, sexual addiction, and domestic abuse.

Required Texts:
The assigned readings will come from the following required textbooks, online articles and Church documents (available online):

Bible

Catechism of the Catholic Church
Second Edition

Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings, Fourth Edition
Philip Boyle (Editor), Kevin D. O'Rourke (Editor)

Gospel of Life, John Paul II
http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html

Create in Me a Clean Heart, USCCB

Course Requirements:
Examinations: There will be two major exams. The dates & format of these exams will be announced. The first exam will cover the first four class topics and the final exam will cover the last four class topics.

Group Work/Participation: There will be group discussion and work that will count towards your final grade.

Grades
Your grade will be determined by the following:

Midterm Examination 45%
Final Examination 45%
Group Work & Participation 10%
Course Readings

1. August 13, 2016: Sexual Morality
   Reading Assignment:
   2. SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH
      PERSONA HUMANA DECLARATION ON CERTAIN QUESTIONS CONCERNING
      SEXUAL ETHICS, Paragraphs 1-15
      http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_do
c_19751229_personahumana_en.html.
   3. Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings
      1. Artificial Contraception, (107-118)
      2. Emergency Contraception (pp. 144-145)
      3. Sterilization (pp. 293-297)
      4. Natural Family Planning, (pp. 111-12, 239-43)
   4. Blessed John Paul II, Theology of the Body
      Read John Paul II’s New Vision of Human Sexuality, Marriage and Family Life and
      explore the writings of the Theology of the Body found at the USCCB website.
   5. Humanae Vitae
      http://www.papalencyclics.net/Paul06/p6humana.htm
   6. Create in Me a Clean Heart, USCCB,
   7. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2331-2400; 2514-2533 (paragraph numbers)

2. August 20, 2016: Gospel of Life
   Methodology of Bioethics
   Beginning of Life Issues
   Reading Assignment:
   1. Gospel of Life Overview
      John Paul II
      http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_25031995_evangelium-vitae_en.html
   2. Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings
      1) Sacredness of Human Life (pp. 3, 90, 152)
      2) Human Life (quality of pp. 206-7)
      3) Embryo (pp. 134-43)
      4) Stem Cells (pp. 290-292)
      5) Genetics (pp. 161-68)
      6) Cloning (pp. 100-103)
   3. Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2258-2262; 2268-2275 (paragraph numbers)

3. August 27, 2016: End of Life Issues
   Reading Assignment:
   1. Declaration on Euthanasia
      Prepared by the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith
   2. Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings
      1) Catholic Identity,(pp. 96-98)
      2) Truth Telling (pp. 313-314)
3. **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2276-2283; 2299-2301 (paragraph numbers)**

4. September 10, 2016:  
   - Infertility Treatment
   - Abortion
   - Organ Transplantations

Reading Assignment:

1. **Medical Ethics: Sources of Catholic Teachings**
   1) Infertility (p. 211)
   2) Artificial Reproduction (p. 69)
   3) Fertility Assistance (pp. 155-157)
   4) Artificial Insemination (pp. 66-71)
   5) In vitro Fertilization, (pp. 66, 215-18)
   6) GIFT (pp. 169-170)
   7) Surrogate Mothers,(pp. 310-11)
   8) Abortion, (pp. 35-44)
   9) RU-486 (p. 287)
   10) Prenatal Adoption (p. 263)
   11) Principle of Cooperation, (pp. 13-16) ; Principle of Double Effect, (pp. 11-13); & Principle of Totality, (pp. 17-18)
   12) Organ Donation and Transplantation (pp. 249-251)
   13) Right to Health Care (pp. 281-284)
   14) Surgery (pp. 306-309)

2. **Donum Vitae (Respect For Human Life)**

3. **Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2270-2273; 2288-2298 (paragraph numbers)**

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**Bibliography**

Benedict M. Ashley, Kevin D. O'Rourke. *Health Care Ethics: A Theological Analysis*  


Richard Gula. *Euthanasia: Moral and Pastoral Perspectives*  
(Paulist Press, 1994).

**Gospel of Life**

Discussion Questions: These questions are here to assist you in reading the *Gospel of Life*. You do not need to turn the responses in to these questions, but these will help guide you and focus on important points of the document.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Why did Pope John Paul II write *Evangelium Vitae*?

**PART ONE**

**PRESENT-DAY THREATS TO HUMAN LIFE**

1. What are the threats to life today? (§10) What threats to life are of greatest concern in this encyclical? (§11)

2. What once were considered criminal acts are now considered rights. How does Pope John Paul II explain this transformation in light of the crisis in culture? (§11) In light of the structure of sin? (§12)

3. How are contraception and abortion linked as “fruits of the same tree”? (§13)

4. What is the attitude of today’s culture toward suffering? (§15)

5. Our Holy Father speaks of a “perverse idea of freedom”. (§18) What are the characteristics of this notion of freedom (§19), and how does it affect society? (§20) What is the basis of the conflict between the “culture of life” and the “culture of death”? (§21)

6. Why is the moral conscience of man in danger? (§24)

**PART TWO**

**LIFE AS GIFT**

1. What is the Gospel of Life? (§29-51)


3. What is man’s responsibility for life? (§42)

4. “It is altogether impossible for life to remain authentic and complete once it is detached from the good; and the good, in its turn is essentially bound to the commandments of the Lord, that is, to the law of life. The good to be done is not added to life as a burden which weighs on it, since the very purpose of life is that good, and only by doing it can life be built up”. (§48) Explain.

5. Why is bodily life not an absolute good? (§47) What is the most authentic meaning of life? (§49)

**PART THREE**

**LIFE AS RESPONSIBILITY**
1. How does the gift of life become a commandment? (§52)

2. What is the canonical punishment by the Church for those who procure or commit abortion? (§62)

3. When are prenatal diagnostic techniques permissible, and when are they shameful? (§63)

4. What is the difference between euthanasia and withholding aggressive medical treatment? Why is the former condemned, and when is the latter permitted? (§65)

5. How does the issue of respect for life reveal the contradictions concealed in ethical relativism? (§70)

6. What is the correct relationship between civil law and moral law? (§71) Are pluralism and democracy absolute goods?

7. God has entrusted us to one another, to care for one another, especially the weak or threatened. How can we do this? (§77)

PART FOUR
LIFE AS A TASK TO BE PROMOTED

1. How are we as the “people of life” to evangelize the world with the Gospel of Life? What is the task of teachers, catechists, and theologians in this work? (§81, 82)

2. “Absolute respect for every innocent human life also requires the exercise of conscientious objection in relation to procured abortion and euthanasia”. (§89) What does this mean for Catholic citizens? Catholic politicians?

3. What is the role of the family in living and proclaiming the Gospel of Life? (§92)

4. For whom is the Gospel of Life given? (§101)