Instructor: Deacon Larry A. Vaclavik:
B.A., Philosophy, University of St. Thomas
Basselin Scholar in Philosophy, The Catholic University of America
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Course Overview: This course will serve as an introduction to fundamental moral theology. Beginning with the history of Christian reflection on the moral and spiritual life from the apostolic age to the present, the course will lead students to consider the role of human nature, human action, conscience, judgment, character, virtue and vice and grace in the moral life. Students will then consider the relationship of nature and grace in human action, the role of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit on the moral life and the guidance of scripture and theological reflection on the moral life. From these foundations, students will study the role of conscience and conscience formation in moral decision making and the role of the magisterium in dealing with moral questions and conflict.

Course Objectives: At the end of the eight week course of studies, students will

- have an introductory history of moral theology and the relationship of moral theology to the fundamental theology and spiritual theology;
- have a knowledge of the role of Scripture and natural law as foundational for the moral theology and moral reflection;
- possess an understanding of how Christian faith and spiritual life impact the moral life of the individual person;
- have an understanding of the role of virtue and vice, the passions, and the elements of human action as principles of moral decision making and moral evaluation;
- know the role of conscience and conscience formation in the moral life; and
- have a basic understanding of some of the contemporary debates and larger questions in moral theology today, such as the threat of relativism and the significance of moral truth as a guide to human action;

This course is intended to provide the student with the theological grounding needed to reflect on issues of the Catholic moral life and the moral life of all human persons. To a great degree the final goal will be achieved if students are able to apply the theological knowledge that has been acquired in this course to current issues in the moral life as found in their daily lives as well as in their parishes, special ministries and greater society.

Grading: The course grade will be based upon two reflection papers of 2 pages (25% each) and the final exam (50%).
**Participation:** Reading will be a critical element of the course. While the course will be primarily lecture in format, class discussions will be utilized to determine the appreciation and understanding of materials covered. Students will be expected to bring to class moral issues identified in the family, parish, workplace and/or newspaper as a part of the class participation.

**Papers:** Papers are not to be research papers per se. At the same time, papers should indicate a knowledge of the principles, terminology and concepts discussed in the class through the use of quotations and references to the thoughts of those studied. The primary purposes of the papers will be to connect and demonstrate the importance and appropriate use of the sources, principles and terminology of moral theology for decision-making in relation to contemporary moral issues.

**Final Exam:** The take-home final may include essays and a variety of short answer, true/false and multiple choice questions.

**Required Course Texts**


**Supplemental (Non-Required) Reference Texts**

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church*


**Course Syllabus**

**January 16**  
**Lecture #1: History, God and Humanity**

a. Defining moral theology  
b. Historical overview of moral theology  
c. The relationship of moral theology to fundamental theology  
d. The centrality of love and freedom in the moral life  
  *(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapter 1, Keenan Introduction and chapter 1)*

**January 23**  
**Lecture #2: Tradition, Scripture and Law**

a. The Old Testament understanding of the moral life  
b. The New Testament and Gospel and the moral life
c. The second pillar of morality – natural law

e. The role of the magisterium

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapters 6, 7, 8, Keenan chapters 5 & 6)

January 30 Lecture #3: Sin, Mercy and Conversion
a. The reality of sin and evil in the moral life
b. The types of sins and their impact on moral life
c. The role of conversion in combatting sinfulness

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapter 4 and Keenan chapters 3)

February 6 Lecture #4: Virtues, Grace and Spirituality
a. Defining and understanding virtues
b. The role of human virtues
c. The role of the theological virtues
d. Virtue, vice and character

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapter 2, Keenan chapter 8)

February 13 Lecture #5: Human Action and Conscience
a. Defining and understanding conscience
b. The process of conscience and judgment
c. Practical judgment in the moral life
d. The process of conscience formation

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapters 3, 5, Keenan chapter 2 and 9)

February 20 Lecture #6: Sexuality and Marriage
a. Love as a guiding force in the moral life
b. Love lived- the experience of suffering
c. Marriage defined and explained
d. The moral life and marriages – blessings and challenges

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapter 10, Keenan chapter 1)

February 27 Lecture #7: Medical Morality
a. Medicine, health and morality
b. Key principles of medical morality
c. Applications

(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapters 9 and 10)

March 6 Lecture #8: Suffering and Social Issues
a. The nature of suffering
b. War and peace
c. Nationalism and globalism
c. Race and racism
d. Immigration
e. Global warming and climate change
f. Course recap
(Readings: O’Neil and Black chapter 11 & 12, Keenan chapters 7)

Reflection Papers are due on Feb 11 and Feb 25.

1. Pick any single moral issue based on a real or imaginary event, you are welcome to pick up a topic from a movie or a television show as long as it is of moral importance. Most importantly the question should not have an obvious outcome. The more difficult the better.
2. State the problem.describe the event and moral issue in a single sentence or brief paragraph.
3. Then conduct a thorough moral analysis in two-typed pages from
   a. a description of the event,
   b. the moral question,
   c. the theological principles involved,
   d. the role of conscience, virtue, and the life of the Spirit in the process of moral decision-making in this case and
   e. arrive at a judgment regarding a course of action that should be taken..
   f. Evaluate the moral legitimacy and rectitude of the course of action.

Accomplish this task in two typed pages.

The topics of abortion, murder, mercy killing, marital infidelity are excluded as topics of papers because these topics have been clearly identified as moral evils.

Note that papers are required to fit the following requirements or will be reduced by 15 points (equal to one letter grade):

- 12-point type for New Times Roman or an equivalent type-font;
- Double-spaced using one-inch side margins;
- In the header state the student name, the course number, the date and the page;
- References should be made in the text in parentheses as in the following:

  (Keenan, Moral Wisdom, p. 97) or (Matt 5: 1- 3) or (CCC #2087)

- All books or articles cited must be included in a bibliography.

All papers should be submitted electronically to lvaclavik@dinispheris.com
And document titles should formatted as follows:

    Last Name First Name Morals Paper #1 2018.doc – f or example:

    Smith, Aloysius Morals Paper #1 2018.doc