

A FAITH TO DIE FOR:
THE MORAL LIFE IN CATHOLIC BELIEF AND PRACTICE

Theology 268
Fall Semester, 2001
Tuesday, Thursday 3:30-4:45
140 De Bartolo

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to Catholic moral theology, with an emphasis on how Catholic belief and practice shapes the Church's understanding of the moral life. It is organized around the four basic parts of the Mass: the Opening Rites, the Liturgy of the Word, the Liturgy of the Eucharist, and the Closing Rites. Within this basic liturgical structure, several aspects of Catholic belief and practice will be explored, including baptism, penance and reconciliation, proclaiming and preaching scripture, communion, Mary, the saints, martyrdom, marriage, and apostolic mission. Moreover, several leading themes in Catholic moral theology will be examined, including the theological and natural virtues, sins and vices, the eternal and natural law, freedom and authority, conscience, and so on; and several issues will be covered as well, such as abortion, suicide, the death penalty, war and peace, and economic justice.

The overall purpose of the course is to develop an understanding of the moral life that is shaped by the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, while at the same time avoiding conceiving the moral life in terms of simplistic pious exhortations ("Jesus says"), blunt-edged moral prohibitions ("Thou shall not"), or arbitrary assertions of ecclesial authority ("The Church says"). Accordingly, "the faith" will be explored as a constellation of beliefs and practices that come together as a distinct form of life, a life that is disturbingly radical, demanding that Christians learn to die to themselves, yet also deeply attractive, in that this dying to self constitutes the road to true life. As suggested by the title, an underlying conviction embedded into this course is that only a faith worth dying for can forge a moral life that is truly worth living.

TEXTS:

Augustine, *Confessions*

Josef Pieper, *The Four Cardinal Virtues*

Pope John Paul II, *Veritatus splendor* (The Splendor of Truth)

Helen Prejean, *Dead Man Walking*

Dorothy Day, *The Long Loneliness*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

The Coursepak

REQUIREMENTS:

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| Participation: | Readings, written assignments or quizzes, oral participation (30 pts) |
| Paper 1: | Due on Monday, Monday, September 10, 5:00 pm (20 pts) |
| Take-home Test: | Due on Friday, October 5, 5:00 pm (40 pts) |
| Paper 2: | Due on Friday, October 19, 5:00 pm (25 pts) |
| Papers 3A-D: | Due at the beginning of their respective class days (30 pts) |
| Paper 4: | Due on Friday, November 30, 5:00pm (25 pts) |
| Final exam: | Given on Tuesday, December 18, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm (30 pts) |

Evaluation for this course is based on a 200-point scale, as shown above, and is converted into a letter grade as follows: 180+ =A; 160+ = B; 140+ = C; 120+ = D; below 120 =F.

ATTENDANCE:

Class attendance is required. Only excused absences will be allowed, and then, only if the professor is notified ahead of time. Students who must be absent from a class will nevertheless be required to write a two-page summary and reflection on that day's readings, which is to be handed in the next class meeting. Moreover, at certain points during the semester, meetings will be held outside of class in order to discuss the readings or a film, and students will be required to attend and participate in these as well.

HONOR CODE:

Students are, of course, expected to abide to the standards of the Notre Dame Honor Code. As regards written work, please be sure to indicate the source for work that is not your own. For protocols in style and formatting, you must use either Kate L.Thurabian, *A Manual for Writers*, Joseph Gibaldi, *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*, or *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

OFFICE HOURS:

440 Malloy: Monday and Wednesday, 3:45 - 4:45; and by appointment.