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Fall 2003
Office Hours: 10:00-10:45 AM Tues/Thurs
and 12:30-1:15 Thurs (and by appointment)

RELIGIOUS STUDIES/PHILOSOPHY

4650/6650

RELIGION AND ETHICS

Course Description and Goals

What is the relationship between religious belief and the moral choices that we make? Are there any moral absolutes? How do different religious and ethical traditions comment on the decisive—and divisive-- issues of our day?

In this course, we will have the opportunity to explore these questions through an examination both of classic moral theologies (ranging from those of Kant and Kierkegaard to the Bhagavad Gita and the Qur'an) and contemporary issues in religious ethics (e.g. abortion, euthanasia, homosexuality, cloning, poverty, warfare). Our exploration of Judeo-Christian themes will be supplemented by readings from Shinto, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, and traditional African religion and will include such diverse topics as the shifting renderings of the Islamic concept of *jihad*, Gandhi's pacifist theories, the emerging Christian perspective on cloning, sexual passion in "desireless" Buddhism, killings "in the name of God," and the interplay of religious belief and business mores in Japan.

I hope that by the end of the semester you will have gained a facility for reading and commenting upon the materials covered, both in class and in your written work. I also hope that you will have begun to refine and/or develop your own positions on some of the central ethical issues of our day.

Course Requirements

Each student's grade will be based upon:

- 1) Active and well-prepared class participation (including the completion of reading assignments *before* the class for which they are assigned) (10%). Students taking the course for graduate or Honors credit periodically will have additional meetings with the instructor.
- 2) Two short "thesis" papers (four to five double-spaced, typed pages) on topics selected by the student and due October 9 and December 4 (20% each).
- 3) A mid-term examination on October 23 (20%) and a final examination on December 18 (30%). In lieu of the final examination, students taking the course for graduate and Honors credit will write a final paper (approximately 8- to 10-typed pages).

Attendance/Make-up Exams

Attendance is required. Students are responsible for the material covered in class. While there is no formal grade reduction for each missed class, the student's class participation grade (see number 1 under Course Requirements) could be adversely effected by absences. Exams may be made up at the discretion of the instructor; if you are to miss an exam, you should inform the instructor at the earliest possible date.

Required Text

Religious Studies/Philosophy 4650/6650 Reader to be purchased at The Printshop,
6 Decatur Street (two blocks west of the General Classroom Building).

Readings (Note: a number of the following readings will be designated as optional for the undergraduate students in the course)

I. God and Morality: The Relationship Explored

Nielsen: Religious and Secular Morality
Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling* (selections)
Krakauer: *Under the Banner of Heaven* (selections)
Kant: *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)
Hauerwas: Christian Ethics in a Fragmented and Violent World; A Qualified Ethic;
The Moral Authority of Scripture

II. Are There Moral Absolutes?

Anscombe: Mr. Truman's Degree
Walzer: Supreme Emergency
Fletcher: Love Justifies its Means
Nielsen: The Search for Absolutes
Keown: Buddhism and Utilitarianism (part 1)

III. War and Peace: The Judeo-Christian Tradition

Anscombe: The Justice of the Present War Examined
Childress: Just War Criteria
Wallis: This War Cannot Be Justified
Hauerwas: Jesus and the Peaceable Kingdom
Renick: The Decline of Charity in the Just-War Tradition; Pre-emptive Justice?: Just Cause, Unrealized Threats and the Grounds of War

IV. War and Peace: Islam

Koran (selections)
Various (Muslim): Suicide Bombings
Al-Jazeera: The Prophet Mohammed as Jihad Model

Waddy: The Spread of Islam, etc.
Osman: Islam, Terrorism, and Western Misapprehensions

V. War and Peace: Hinduism, Buddhism

Bhagavad Gita (selections)
Gandhi; Anasakti Yoga, The Gita and Satyagraha
Buddha: The Four Noble Truths
Walpola Rahula: The Fourth Noble Truth
Keown: Buddhism and Utilitarianism (part 2)
Olsen: Interpreting the Term *Zazen* in Kantian Language
Tan Tai Wei: Morality and the God of Love

VI. Poverty, Economics and Social Status

Hardin: Lifeboat Ethics
Hanks: Why People Are Poor
Hollenbach: The Biblical Justice of Politics
Novak: Capitalism and Christianity
Shinohara: Religion and Economic Development in Japan
Confucius: On Business

VII. Abortion

Grisez: Abortion--Ethical Arguments
Thomson: A Defense of Abortion
Fletcher: Abortion
Hauerwas: Why Abortion is a Religious Issue
Biale: Abortion in Jewish Law
Statements from Jewish Groups on Abortion
Rahman: Birth and Abortion in Islam
Waddy: The Islamic Position
Lesco: A Buddhist View of Abortion

VIII. Euthanasia

Smith: On Letting Some Babies Die
Fletcher: Infanticide, Indicators of Humanhood
Lesco: Euthanasia--A Buddhist Perspective

IX. Cloning

Evans: Saying No to Human Cloning
Renick: A Cabbit in Sheep's Clothing

X. Sex

Hassan: Sexuality—An Islamic Perspective
Clough: Buddhism on Sexuality
Aquinas: On Sex
Yacob: The Treatise of Zera Yacob
Geisler: The Christian and Sex
Gordis: Homosexuality and the Homosexual
Biale: Sexual Subversions in the Bible
Curran: Homosexuality and Moral Theology
Valente: A New Direction
Wood: Christ and the Homosexual
McFaul: Homosexuality
Kahn: Making love as Making Justice—Toward A New Jewish Ethic of Sexuality

XI. Postscript

Green: Why Should I Be Moral?

NOTE: This syllabus represents a general plan for the course; changes may be necessary.

LISTSERVS

Sign up for GSU's Religious Studies and Philosophy listservs by doing the following:

1. From the computer at which you wish to receive messages, send an e-mail to listproc@listproc.gsu.edu
2. Leave the subject line blank and include ONLY the following in the body of the message:
subscribe relmajor your_name_here
[For example, the line would read: subscribe listserv Jane Smith]
3. Do not add any attachments, punctuation, or anything else, and do not sign the note.
4. For the philosophy listserv, follow the same steps but write the following in the body of the e-mail: subscribe philmajor your_name_here (Graduate students can sign up for: subscribe philgrad your_name_here)