Loyola Institute for Ministry

Spirituality, Morality and Ethics
LIM G704-W01

Instructor: Dr. Marion Danforth
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Important! You will be notified by email when your course web site is available (normally the week before class begins). Please check your Loyola email account for instructions. To find your Loyola email address, go to the Loyola home page: www.loyno.edu. At the upper right section of the home page (grey area), go to “Find People.” Enter your first and last name and select “student,” then hit return. You should see your email address. In the same grey area of the home page, you may select “webmail” to access your Loyola email. Additional help on email is available at: <http://www.loyno.edu/infotech/docs/index.html>.

Please reply to the instructor’s email when you receive it to confirm that you are ready to begin the course. If you experience difficulties in finding your email address, please contact Diane Blair: dblair@loyno.edu.

Course Description:

Traditional Catholic ethics are examined in the light of Vatican II. Students study the nature of the human person and the meaning of freedom and sin. They also explore the role of Scripture, reason and the natural law, norms, conscience, and Church authority in making moral decisions. Throughout the course, Christian living is placed in the context of personal spirituality and the call to discipleship. Sexual ethics and Catholic social teaching are discussed at length in the course.

Key Learning Outcomes:

Our intended goal for the course in its broadest scope is to deepen participants' consciousness of themselves and others as responsible agents of history, shaped in part by the historical conditions and culture of the past and co-creating the shape of the future. It is our hope that participants will move beyond this course to act in the world as persons able to translate the Christian vision and values into the concrete realities of life and into more just social structures.
More specifically, the goals of the course are to enable students to:

- Appreciate the scope, breadth and historical development of the Catholic tradition of ethics;
- Examine some significant contemporary ethical issues in light of the Catholic ethical tradition;
- Make ethical decisions and assist others in arriving at ethical decisions using principles and norms based in the Catholic ethical tradition;
- Draw implications from the historical perspective on evolving ethical frameworks for their own life and ministry.

**Required Readings (assigned chapters from the following):**


Web links to articles and other required resources will be provided on the Blackboard web site.

*Please order this text from a local bookstore or from an online source such as [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) or [www.barnesandnoble.com](http://www.barnesandnoble.com)*

**Evaluation**

*Participation in Weekly Sessions (40% of Graduate Student evaluation; 100% of ceu evaluation)*

The sessions of this course include assignments for reading, video segments and discussion questions. These are provided in the Assignments section of the course web site. In addition to reading all the materials assigned and listening to assigned audio segments, all students will also be expected to participate in the class discussions by way of the Discussion Board. Participation in class discussions accounts for 40% of the grade.
for graduate students. CEU credit (100%) is also determined by weekly participation in the discussions and session assignments. Students are asked to read all posts and respond *substantively* to at least three of your colleagues' postings (i.e., more than "I agree." or "I like your ideas." -- say why and include your own reflections on the readings, course materials, and experience). Ideally, each discussion “thread” of the course will become a conversation. Be sure to check responses to your own postings and respond to any questions that others may have posed for you.

*Graduate Student Reflective Essays (60%):*

In addition to participation in weekly session discussions, graduate students will complete two reflective essays that together comprise 60% of their final grade. Please be sure to use the MLA style in citing references. The *LIM Guide to Written Theological Reflection* provides guidelines and examples. It is found in the Resources>General Resources>Writing section of the course Blackboard site.

**Paper 1: Case study: Analysis of a personal moral decision**  (25%)

(To be submitted at the end of Session 5)

In a 5-6 page essay, Select and analyze a moral decision, which could realistically involve you or someone you know personally, and propose an ethical resolution to the issue.

The paper may focus on an unresolved moral decision, for which you will seek the best possible solution, OR a moral decision already made, which you will evaluate to determine whether it was the best possible. The case should involve several important values which seem to be in tension, such that several outcomes are possible. It can be a hypothetical case, so long as it is realistic. The paper must address the following:

- At the start of your paper, identify a key moral decision to be made (or evaluated, if the decision has already been made). Provide background information to introduce the situation and the people involved to your reader.

- Explain how various stakeholders are directly involved in the case. Also explain any significant stakeholders who may be impacted more indirectly, including the larger community. As you consider alternative solutions, explain potential short term and long term impacts on these stakeholders. Consider the physical/material/financial and emotional/relational/spiritual impacts, both positive and negative. Use research to document likely impacts.

- Explore Christian perspectives, noting scriptural themes, virtues, moral principles/norms, and/or moral distinctions most relevant to this decision. There may be developments over Christian history, or contrasting views within
Christianity/Catholicism. (Ex: some Christians consume alcohol and others don’t.) Ideally, you should explain this, especially if it makes a difference in your solution. Explain how Catholicism has addressed your topic (if you are from another faith tradition, please include any relevant additional perspectives from your tradition’s sources). There may be specific Catholic magisterial teaching on your topic, but sometimes there isn’t; clarify this.

If there is no specific magisterial teaching on your topic, explain related themes and then draw inferences.

- **Identify at least 2 possible solutions** and reasons, benefits, and drawbacks for each. **Select one solution** that you find most compelling, and explain why it is the best option available. Be specific in explaining how you would carry out this decision.

- Explain **at least one** strategy or habit/virtue which could be adopted to prevent this dilemma arising again in the future—or, if it cannot be prevented, to reduce its severity.

Be sure to cite all sources using MLA Style. See the *LIM Guide to Written Theological Reflection* for guidance on the format, in-text citation style, and Works Cited requirements of papers. It is found in the Resources>General Resources>Writing section of the course Blackboard site.

To assist you in preparation of this essay, the following assignments are also due:

**Weekly Session 2 Assignment**: Choose, identify, and submit your topic for your paper on the case study of a personal moral decision. This assignment counts as part of the overall participation grade for graduate students.

Note: Your second paper will analyze the moral dimensions of a social issue. For this first paper, you may choose a personal decision related to the topic of your second paper. This is not necessary, but in choosing your topic for Paper 1, consider if you want to relate the two papers. For example:

- The 1st paper topic might be, “Should I hire an undocumented immigrant and pay her ‘under the table’ to provide childcare in my home?” The 2nd paper topic could be, “In 2011 Alabama enacted a controversial policy to reduce the number of undocumented immigrants in that state. Is this law well-designed and morally justified? If not, how should it be modified?”

**Weekly Session 4 Assignment**: Complete your research and investigation on the decision question. Submit a bibliography of sources you intend to use in your second paper. (An annotated bibliography would be ideal but is not necessary). This assignment counts as part of the participation grade for graduate students.
• Consult relevant course readings and videos from sessions 1 through 4; include at least 2 distinct, well-chosen connections in your paper. If possible, refer to at least 2 different lessons, showing how the content you chose relates to the ethical decision you are analyzing.

• Consult the most relevant Catholic magisterial sources and other Catholic traditions, and if you are from a different faith tradition, the moral teachings of your own faith tradition. (See the list of magisterial sources and other research links found in the Resource>Course Resources section of this Blackboard site).

• Consult at least 2 additional scholarly sources from other fields of expertise needed to make a decision with a well-educated conscience. These may include social and medical sciences, legal or professional regulations, demographic or financial data, etc. It will be helpful to use at least one source which examines this non-theological information in relation to Christian perspectives.

Paper 2: Analysis and critical evaluation of a social policy (35%)

To be submitted at the end of Session 11

In an 8-10 page paper, identify, analyze, and critically evaluate a social policy that impacts many people. It may be an existing policy or a proposed policy. It may be a government policy, the policy of a church or church-related institution, the policy of an employer, corporation, or professional group, etc. (See examples below.) The policy should be considered morally controversial or ethically problematic, at least by some people.

The paper should include the following elements. The order in which you include these elements can vary, so long as all are addressed:

• At the start of your paper, identify the policy under consideration. Before going too far into the paper, summarize why it is considered morally controversial or problematic. Also provide historical/contextual background on the purpose of the policy, and the circumstances which led to it being enacted or proposed.

• Explain how various stakeholders are directly impacted by the policy. Also explain any significant stakeholders who may be impacted more indirectly. In particular, explain how this policy might impact the common good, both present and future. As you compare the existing/proposed policy to alternatives, explain potential short term and long term impacts on these stakeholders. Consider
physical/material/financial and emotional/relational/ spiritual impacts, both positive and negative. Use research to document likely impacts.

- Explore Christian perspectives relevant to this policy, noting scriptural themes, virtues, moral principles/ norms, and/or moral distinctions which are most relevant. There may be developments over Christian history, or contrasting views within Christianity/Catholicism. (Ex: some Christian institutions sponsor gambling; others don’t.) Ideally, you should explain this, especially if it makes a difference in your solution. Explain how Catholicism has addressed your topic. There may be official, specific Catholic magisterial teaching on your topic, but sometimes there isn’t; clarify this. In particular, explain how moral priorities which are important to Christians can be communicated persuasively to any religiously pluralistic or secular community impacted by the policy. If there is no specific magisterial teaching on your topic, explain related themes and then draw inferences or describe parallels.

- Compare the policy under consideration with at least one alternative, identifying reasons, benefits and drawbacks for each. For instance, compare an existing policy with a previous policy, and/or with a proposed policy. Then, select one policy you find most compelling, and explain why it is the best option available, giving reasons and evidence to support your conclusion.

- Identify one or more significant criticisms of your favored policy, and respond point-by-point. Be diplomatic, specific, and practical in explaining how your favored policy is the best way to address your critics’ legitimate concerns. Or, explain why the critics’ concerns aren’t compelling. Demonstrate sincere effort to understand concerns of people whose outlook differs from your own; pay attention to consensus that may exist alongside areas of disagreement. You will be critical, but avoid referring to your critics with inflammatory terms, and avoid inaccurate generalizations about them. Imagine meeting your critics face-to-face, and critique them appropriately. Your goal isn’t to defeat opponents, but to pursue the common good, together with other conscientious people, and ideally, to foster cooperation and consensus about social issues that have been divisive.

- If you favor an existing policy, suggest ways you might work with others to cultivate support for it. If you favor a policy which isn’t currently in effect, suggest ways you might work with others to implement it.

Within the body of your paper, all direct quotes, close paraphrases, statistics, scientific studies, and similar technical data should be individually cited with a page number, if available. See the LIM Guide to Written Theological Reflection for examples of MLA
Sample Topics:

- affirmative action in college admissions/scholarships or employment
- assisted suicide
- sterilization of mentally retarded people
- public vouchers for private education
- gambling
- inclusion or exclusion of pregnant/parenting minors in schools
- teen curfew laws
- parental consent laws
- corporal punishment in schools
- paying elementary and high school students for good grades
- gun control
- eligibility for welfare benefits
- religious exemptions for agencies and businesses regarding laws favoring same-sex marriage
- minimum wage laws
- minors serving as translators for relatives in medical decision-making
- driving privileges for teenagers and/or the elderly
- abortion
- capital punishment
- legalization of marijuana or other drugs
- minimum drinking age for alcohol
- legal or employment benefits for same-sex partners or spouses
- mandated coverage of sterilization and contraception in medical insurance
- protection of whistleblowers
- environmental policy
- sale of human organs
- ‘sin’ taxes (on tobacco, alcohol, etc.)
- assassination of foreign dictators or terrorist leaders
- voting rights for convicted felons
- polygamy
- legalization of prostitution
- media censorship
- mandatory service hours as a school graduation requirement
- grade inflation/social promotion in schools
- China’s one-child population control policy
• Should schools pick valedictorians?
• Should obese children be monitored by government authorities?
• Should babies live with their mothers in prison?
• Should religious organizations have tax-exempt status?
• Should women be required to register for a military draft?
• living restrictions for convicted sex offenders after release from prison
• financial compensation for persons wrongfully-convicted and imprisoned
• regulation of ‘pay day loan’ companies
• eligibility for legal immigration or refugee status

To assist you in developing this paper, the following assignments will be due in sessions:

Weekly Session 6 Assignment: Choose, identify, and submit your topic for your Paper 2 on an analysis and critical evaluation of a social policy that impacts many people. This assignment counts as part of the participation grade for graduate students.

Weekly Session 9 Assignment: Complete your research and investigation on the social policy issue. Submit a bibliography of sources you intend to use in your second paper. (An annotated bibliography would be ideal but is not necessary). This assignment counts as part of the participation grade for graduate students.

• Consult relevant course readings and videos from sessions 5 through 10; include at least 2 distinct, well-chosen connections in your paper. If possible, refer to at least 2 different lessons.

• Consult the most relevant Catholic magisterial sources (See Resources>Course Resources and other Catholic traditions. In particular, investigate whether Catholic leaders, institutions, and groups have been involved in forming/advocating this policy, or in attempting to revise or abolish it.

• Consult at least 3 additional scholarly sources from other fields of expertise needed to make a decision with a well-educated conscience. If your 1st and 2nd papers have related topics, these should be different sources which expand upon research used in the 1st paper. If possible, review an actual copy of the policy, and interview people (potentially) affected by it. (It will be helpful to use at least one source which examines this non-theological information in relation to Christian perspectives.)
Grading Scale:

A = 93-100  
A- = 90-92.9  
B+ = 87-89.9  
B = 83-86.9  
B- = 80-82.9  
C+ = 77-79.9  
C = 70-76.9  
F = 0-69.9

Format of this Course

The heart of the conversation in this on-line course will take place by way of a discussion board, an asynchronous or time-independent application. This means that you will have no set times or schedules of when you must be in class. We do expect that you will come to class three times a week. At that time you will be able to read the comments of your instructor and fellow students and you will be able to share your comments as well.

To participate in these on-line students will need a computer with high-speed internet access. Check requirements: http://library.loyno.edu/browser_check.php. You will also need sound and video capability in order to listen to the weekly video segments and a variety of applications, such as a free version of "Quicktime." (To download the free Quicktime program to listen to audios, please install the latest version: http://www.apple.com/quicktime/download/). You may find links to these applications in the button named "Resources" > General Resources>Plug-ins, on the left page of this course web site. You should also use Mozilla Firefox as your browser for this Blackboard course, as Microsoft Explorer and other browser programs do not activate all of the features in Blackboard. Please be sure that you have downloaded the most recent version of the free programs listed in the “Plug-Ins” section.

Obtaining Textbooks

Please order your required textbooks as early as possible from your local book store, directly from the publisher (this is especially helpful for documents from the U.S. Bishops Conference), or from an internet source such as Amazon.com or BarnesandNoble.com. Some texts are available only from special sources, so please check any notes listed in the “Required Texts” section of the syllabus.
Library and Technical Assistance

Directions on how to use the Loyola library databases and e-books are in the DIY (Do It Yourself) section of the library web site: http://library.loyno.edu/ask/diy/handouts/
If you encounter any difficulties, you may also connect in live chat with a librarian: http://library.loyno.edu/ask/ask_librarian_live.php

If you have questions about Blackboard, you may:

- Visit the Learning Commons desk at the Monroe Library (in person)
- Call our 24/7 Blackboard assistance numbers: 1-866-562-7278.
- Contact live internet support, a comprehensive collection of Bb FAQs and troubleshooting guides, and animated tutorials on how the system works can be found via the “Bb Help and FAQs” button on the Blackboard site.

To Contact the Loyola Institute for Ministry

Loyola Institute for Ministry
Campus Box 67
6363 St. Charles Avenue
New Orleans, LA 70118
Email: lim@loyno.edu

Phone:
Toll Free in the U.S. and Canada: 1 (800) 777-5469
Toll Free in the U.K. 0800-896-344
OR: (504) 865-3728

For course questions, please contact your instructor directly. The email and contact information is listed in the Faculty section of the Blackboard site.

University Policy

Statement on Intellectual Honesty: Intellectual honesty is simply acknowledging, through documentation, all those sources that the writer has used in preparing any written work. Plagiarism, the obverse of intellectual honesty, is the use of any form of material, whether written or verbal, without formal indebtedness through documentation. The paraphrasing of any work, either written by other students or found in print or in an electronic form, without acknowledgement, is plagiarism. Not properly identifying the source of a quotation, even though the quotation is enclosed in quotation marks, is also plagiarism. Not only the exact language of a sentence or phrase, but any material falsely presented as one’s own – an ideal, a concept, data, graphs, or a line of argument –
constitutes plagiarism. Any material that neither originates with the student nor is common knowledge among educated persons must be formally acknowledged. It must be remembered that written work stands on its own, not on the intention of the writer. The burden of academic honesty rests on the student, not on the instructor. If students have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism or what is required, they should inquire before the work is submitted. Otherwise, they open themselves to charges of plagiarism.

The penalties for plagiarism are severe: a student who is found to have plagiarized or to have assisted another student in plagiarizing may be given a failing grade for the course on the first violation; a second offense may result in exclusion or dismissal from the university.

**Statement of Incomplete Grades:** Grades of “I” (incomplete) change to “F” automatically if the course is not completed and the grade changed by the sixth week of the subsequent term, excluding summer terms.

**Disability Statement:** Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Office of Disability Services at 865-2990 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
Please note that the first week of class is Jan. 19- Jan. 26

Week 2: Jan. 26 --Feb. 2 (Post the description of your ministry praxis by Thursday, Jan. 29th; post topic for first paper by Feb. 1.)
Week 3: Feb. 2 - Feb 9 (conference call Feb. 9, 7 PM CT, 8 PM ET)
Week 4: Feb 9 - Feb. 16

Break Feb. 16 - Feb. 23

Week 5: Feb. 23 - Mar. 2
Week 6: Mar. 2 - Mar. 9
Week 7: Mar. 9 - Mar. 16 (Submit topic for second paper by March 15.)
Week 8: Mar. 16- Mar. 23

Week 9: March 23 - March 30 (Submit bibliography by March 29; conference call March 23, 7PM CT, 8PM ET).

Break March 30 - April 6

Week 10: April 6 - April 13
Week 11: April 27 - May 4

Final Paper Due by May 4, Noon CST