

ST. PETER'S SEMINARY/KING'S COLLEGE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
at The University of Western Ontario - Fall 2014

Sacramental Theology 5432A and RS 2239F

Christian Bioethics

Tuesday: 9:30 a.m. - 12:50 p.m.

St. Peter's Seminary – Rm. 102

Professor: Father Michael Prieur, B.A., B.Th., S.T.L., S.T.D.

Office hours by appointment (519-432-1824, x. 223) Email: mprieur@uwo.ca

A. Course Description

This is a specialized course concerning Roman Catholic moral principles with clinical/pastoral applications for a pluralistic world. Topics include: Perinatology issues (birth control, abortion, human reproductive assistance, etc.), organ transplants, genetic engineering, stem cell research, dying and death, resource allocation and some aspects of global ethics. Expert guest speakers from various bioethical and pastoral venues are included. Many applications to health care institutions and pastoral situations are made.

B. Goals

This course will allow the students to grow in the following knowledge, skills and attitudes:

Knowledge:

1. To understand the tradition of Roman Catholic moral theology, and its foundation in God's revelation to us through Sacred Scripture, Sacred Tradition and human reasoning regarding our salvation in Jesus Christ and our response to follow him in our moral life;
2. To understand the methodology of moral theology as it applies to bioethical issues, drawing upon four sources: (1) biblical themes of scripture; (2) the historical testimony of the Catholic moral tradition; (3) rational philosophical reasoning; and (4) the influences of modern human sciences;
3. To acquaint the student with the classical and contemporary writers in bioethics, with the fundamental concepts, principles and theories of bioethical reasoning;
4. To include in our explorations other faith-based and secular approaches which complement the search for truth and promote authentic moral dialogue concerning human dignity and a just society;
5. To acquaint the student with some of the legitimate experts in some of the bioethical fields under study in order to connect their experience with our faith;
6. To understand how the action of the Holy Spirit in the world can make it possible for a faith-based bioethical perspective to be influential in our culture;
7. To ground the bioethical issues of life and death with a special emphasis on a clear understanding of natural law and an authentic theology of the body.

Skills

1. To enable the student to reflect on the moral dimensions of our human experience by studying issues of bioethical concern in our society today;
2. To be able to understand and articulate specific bioethical issues and problems that influence our society on the local, national and international level in order to formulate valid Christian and Catholic responses;
3. To expect the student to understand, and for Catholics to be able to accept, the Church's Magisterium as the normative source of teachings on faith and morals, and to appreciate the openness of the tradition to historical development and all valid theological inquiry on moral and pastoral issues in bioethics;
4. To enable the student to read and analyse appropriately the documents of the Church pertaining to the moral teaching of the Church in bioethics;

5. To develop the practical set of skills required in effectively applying a discernment model in doing clinical and pastoral ethics;
6. To develop the skills necessary to articulate clearly the Christian and Catholic teachings in bioethics and their practical application to specific issues and problems;
7. To enable the student to develop a prudential pastoral approach to people and situations based on an adequate knowledge of applicable fundamental moral principles in light of the lived experience of people;
8. To assist the students to integrate what they have learned by witnessing and using adult modes of education including various kinds of lectures, discussions, role-playing scenarios, audio-visuals, written projects and reflective modes of learning.

Attitudes:

1. To develop in the student a critical awareness of the present moral issues that we face in order to identify and promote moral values related to the dignity of the human person, the common good of society and our created world;
2. To develop a sense of solidarity with, and love for, the sick and suffering, and those faced with difficult ethical decisions, by making a preferential option for their situation of poverty rooted in our faith in Jesus Christ;
3. To appreciate the need for just solutions to difficult bioethical concerns, and the urgency for those in our society and our church to work for these values with all people of good will, especially in our multi-cultural environment;
4. To help the student to embrace and resist when necessary, disagreement and ambiguity in the relationship of moral theology and its pastoral application through an attitude of "mercy-in-truth";
5. To encourage or elicit within the student a deeper sense of moral responsibility for all human beings from conception to natural death as well as for the whole of creation;
6. To encourage just and hope-filled approaches regarding difficult bioethical issues in the light of the saving grace of Jesus Christ available to everyone;
7. To engender the compassionate, healing, reconciling attitude of Jesus Christ toward all human suffering, uncertainty, moral dilemmas, and victims of injustice and poverty, an attitude ultimately based on trust in God our heavenly Father through the help of the Holy Spirit.

C. Assessment

1. The student will be asked to read three key church documents dealing with bioethics and then to do a reflection paper on them according to a given three-page template. (15 x 3 = 45 marks)
2. There will be a one-hour mid-term written test on another key document assigned early in the course, along with some of the course text. (20 marks)
3. There will be a written final exam based on sections of the text book and some of the class materials. (35 marks)

D. Required Sources

Required Textbook:

John A. Leies, S.M., *Handbook on Critical Life Issues*, Revised Third Edition, Philadelphia, The National Catholic Bioethics Centre, 2010. Contains the following key church documents:

1. Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Iura et Bona, Declaration on Euthanasia*, 1980;

2. -----, *Donum Vitae, Instruction on Respect for Human Life in its Origins and on the Dignity of Procreation – Replies to Certain Questions of the Day*, 1987;

3. -----, *Dignitas Personae, The Dignity of the Person*, 2008;

Further required readings:

4. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae, The Gospel of Life*, 1995.

5. Catholic Health Association of Canada, *Health Ethics Guide*, Ottawa, 2012 (3rd. ed. Revised)

E. Structure of the Course

1. Bioethics in a Multicultural Age

- 1.1 Introduction to Bioethics: key texts, resources, assignments, etc.
- 1.2 The Emergence of Secular Bioethics
- 1.3 The Foundations of the Ethics of Health Care
- 1.4 Current Methodologies in Bioethics
- 1.5 Faith and Reason in Health Care Ethics

2. Ethics and Personhood

- 2.1 An Ethics Based on Innate Human Needs
- 2.2 Jesus Christ, Healer, as Ethical Model
- 2.3 Personhood known by reason and faith (**Leies, 3-43**)
- 2.4 Moral Norms Especially Relevant to Health Care
- 2.5 Health Care in Canada: CHAC: *Health Ethics Guide*
- 2.6 A Model for Ethical Discernment

3. The Beginning of Human Life

- 3.1 The Beginning of a Human Person (**Leies, 55-64**)
- 3.2 Abortion in Medicine and Ethics (**Leies, 65-82**)
- 3.3 Human Issues in Reproduction (**Leies, 93-108**)
 - 3.3.1 Prenatal diagnosis
 - 3.3.2 Contraception and Natural Family Planning (**Merrilyn Currie**)
 - 3.3.3 Sterilization
 - 3.3.4 Care of Sexually Assaulted Victims
 - 3.3.5 Assisted Reproduction: AIH, AID, IVF, GIFT, ZIFT, etc.
 - 3.3.6 Disputed areas: ectopic pregnancies, early induction, adoption of human embryos, conjoined twins;

4. Reconstructing and Modifying the Human Body

- 4.1 Modifying the Human Body
- 4.2 Genetic Intervention (**Leies 185-194**)
- 4.3 Genetic Screening and Counseling
- 4.4 Organ Transplantation; the use of Anencephalic Infants as Organ Donors (**Leies 119-30**)
- 4.5 Reconstructive and Cosmetic Surgery
- 4.6 Experimentation on Human Subjects
- 4.7 Stem Cell Research (**Leies, 109-118**) (**Dr. David Hill**)

5. **Mental Health: Ethical Perspectives**
 - 5.1 What is Mental Health?
 - 5.2 Medical/Surgical Therapies
 - 5.3 Psycho-therapies
 - 5.4 The Christian Model of Mental Health
 - 5.5 Ethical Problems in Mental Health

6. **Suffering and Death: A Theological Perspective**
 - 6.1 The Mystery of Suffering and Death
 - 6.2 Fear of Death
 - 6.3 Defining Death (**Leies 173-184**)
 - 6.4 Decisions about prolonging life (**Leies 149-162**)
 - 6.5 Care for human remains; cryopreservation
 - 6.6 Suicide, Physician Assisted Suicide (PAS), and Euthanasia (**Leies 131-148**)
 - 6.7 Allowing to Die: Withholding or Withdrawing Life Support; Pain Management
 - 6.8 Care of Permanently Unconscious Patients
 - 6.9 Advance Directives and the Power of Attorney

7. **Bioethics in the Pluralistic 21st Century: Social and Pastoral Responsibilities**
 - 7.1 Globalization and Bioethics
 - 7.2 Social Responsibility Issues: (**Overview only**)
 - 7.2.1 Professional Depersonalizing Trends
 - 7.2.2 Characteristics of Medicine as a Profession
 - 7.2.3 Health Care Counseling
 - 7.2.4 Professional Communication and Confidentiality
 - 7.2.5 The Political Situation of Health Care Today
 - 7.2.6 Principles of Health Care Policy
 - 7.2.7 Health Care Ethics and Public Policy
 - 7.2.8 Responsibilities of Catholic Health Care Facilities
 - 7.3 **Allocation of Resources: Macro and Micro Dimensions**
 - 7.4 Health Care and Issues of Governance (**CHAC, Health Ethics Guide**, Ch. 7, pp. 91-110)

8. **Christian and R.C. Bioethics: what role in a post-modern secular culture?**

Notes: 1. The course will have 2 or 3 guest speakers depending on their availability.
 2. We may not cover all of the themes listed above in class.

F. University Regulations

Students are responsible for knowing the University's academic policies and regulations and any particularities of their own course of study. These can be found at the University's website (<http://www.uso.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholoff.pdf>). Ignorance of these policies is not an excuse for any violation thereof. The following points are particularly important to note:

Submission of Assignments: It is the responsibility of the student to organize his or her work so that the assignments are completed on time. A penalty of 10% of the value of the assignment will be deducted for each day it is overdue without permission.

Plagiarism: Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea or passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt by quotation marks and/or footnotes. Plagiarism is a major academic offense. Students may be required to submit their work in electronic form for plagiarism checking.

Selection and Registration of Courses: Students are responsible for ensuring that their selection of courses is appropriate and accurately recorded, that all prerequisite course(s) have been successfully completed, and that they are aware of any anti-requisite course(s) that they have taken.

G. Select Bibliographies

See Benedict M. Ashley, O.P., Jean DeBlois, C.S.J., and Kevin D. O'Rourke, O.P., *Health Care Ethics – A Catholic Theological Analysis*, 5th edition, Washington, D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2006, with an extensive bibliography on pp. 265-303.

Also, see John A. Leies, S.M., *Handbook on Critical Life Issues – Revised Third Edition*, Philadelphia, Pa., The National Catholic Bioethics Centre, 2010, pp. 263-270 for another extensive bibliography.