

# ThM 599P: INTRODUCTION *to* CATHOLIC BIOETHICS

Spring 2021. Instructor: Fr. Luke Dysinger, O.S.B.

Phone: 805 482-2755 ext. 1057. E-mail: [ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu](mailto:ldysinger@stjohnsem.edu)

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### DESCRIPTION:

This course will examine the history of Catholic ethical teaching on medicine and health care, with particular attention to common ethical dilemmas concerning the beginning and the end of life. The development of the Catholic moral tradition of health care and bioethics will be examined both from an historical perspective and through careful study of official Catholic teaching documents, including the following: *Humanae Vitae* (Pope Paul VI); *Evangelium Vitae* (Pope John Paul II); *Jura et Bona* (CDF); *Donum Vitae* (CDF); *Dignitas Personae* (CDF); and *Ethical and Religious Directives* (USCCB).

The richly-diverse social, cultural, and ethnic traditions represented by both the students and the communities they will serve will provide the background against which the following contemporary issues will be studied in light of Roman Catholic moral teaching: (1) Human Fertility and Infertility, (natural family planning, contraceptive technology, assisted reproduction, abortion); (2) Genetic and Embryological Dilemmas at the Beginning of Life (pre-natal diagnosis, embryological and fetal malformation, intra-uterine medical and surgical interventions); (3) Research and Experimentation on Human Subjects (informed consent, cloning, stem-cell research, tissue and organ donation); (4) The Perennial Specter of Eugenics; (5) Terminal Illness and Disability (euthanasia, nutrition and hydration, withdrawing life support, palliative and hospice care).

### GOALS:

1. The student will be able to identify important persons, issues, and schools of thought that influenced the development of Catholic teaching concerning health care.
2. The student will learn to make use of relevant primary and secondary sources available in both printed and electronic formats, and will become familiar with appropriate reference works in Catholic bioethics.
3. The student will be able to apply Catholic moral teaching to moral issues concerning reproductive technology and end-of-life care.
4. The student will be able to teach the significance of these moral issues and schools of thought at the parish level in the context of the “New Evangelization”.

### COURSE FORMAT AND EVALUATION:

#### 1. CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS

- a. This course will combine assigned textbook and online readings. Active participation in classroom discussions is essential, and will figure into the final evaluation, as detailed below in §4.b.
- b. Participation in classroom discussion will be assessed according to three criteria: (1) demonstration that the student has comprehended the assigned readings and lectures; (2) pastoral response to the material, including examples and/or further reflection on the implication of the materials presented; (3) pastoral quality and content of students’ responses to other students’ observations.
- c. The term “pastoral” in this context includes the students’ capacity to apply church teaching in a way that is both comprehensible and sensitive to the situation of the individual(s) with whom they interact and/or to whom they minister.

## 2. EXAMINATIONS

- a. The midterm and final examination will consist of essay questions based on pastoral situations.
- b. Students are required to submit their answers within one week of the date the exams are posted: these must be typed, double-spaced, and contain appropriate references.

## 3. RESEARCH PROJECT – Due Friday, April 30, 2021

- a. Instead of the midterm and final examinations, a research project may be undertaken. Topics for the research project include: any ethical issue or author discussed in class; or a comparison of the approaches taken by two different authors. The goal of the research project is to demonstrate familiarity with official Church teaching and current ethical thought in the area of Catholic bioethics.
- b. The project will take the form of a written paper at least ten pages in length (excluding title page and bibliography), double-spaced, including appropriate references.
- c. In lieu of a written research project, students who prefer the medium of verbal presentation may offer the results of their research as a 20-30 minute powerpoint or web-page presentation, including recorded narrative, intended for use in teaching. The presentation must be of the same academic quality as a graduate-level paper and include appropriate references

## 4. EVALUATION

- a. Students must clearly distinguish between: (a) their own work; and (b) ideas or text they have taken from other sources, including the Internet, published texts or audio-visual materials. The requirement to distinguish clearly between one's own work and the research of others applies equally to written and oral presentations. Failure to give credit to cited sources constitutes plagiarism and will result in a grade of "F" for the material presented and may result in failure of the course.
- b. The final course grade will be computed as follows:

Classroom Discussion	20%
Midterm Examination (or Research Project)	40%
Final Examination (or Research Project)	40%

**REQUIRED TEXTS:** (required selections from Ford, Jones and the *Catechism* are available on the course website)

Austriaco, Nicanor, *Biomedicine and Beatitude, An Introduction to Catholic Bioethics* (Cath. Univ. of Am.Pr., 2011), ISBN 978-08132-1881-6.

Ford, Norman M., *The Prenatal Person*, (Blackwell Publishers, 2002), ISBN: 0631234926.

Jones, David Albert, *The Soul of the Embryo, An Inquiry into the Status of the Human Embryo in the Christian Tradition*, (Continuum, London, 2004), ISBN: 0826462960

May, William, *Catholic Bioethics and the Gift of Human Life*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., (Our Sunday Visitor, 2008) ISBN: 1592763308

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTS** (available on the course website)

### CATHOLIC CHURCH TEACHING DOCUMENTS

Pope Pius XII: *Address to the First International Conference on Histopathology of the Nervous System* (1952; *Address to Anesthesiologists* (1957).

Pope John Paul II: *Salvifici Doloris*, (*On The Christian Meaning Of Human Suffering*, 1984); *Evangelium Vitae*, (*The Gospel of Life*, 1995); *On Life-Sustaining Treatment and the Vegetative State*, (March, 2004); *On Palliative Care*, (Nov., 2004)

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: *Nutrition and Hydration; Moral and Pastoral Reflections* (1992); *Ethical and Religious Directives*, rev. ed. (2010). *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* (2007, rev. 2012); *Twenty Questions for Faithful Citizens* (2012).

Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith: *Declaration On Procured Abortion*, (1974); *Persona Humana*, (*Declaration on Sexual Ethics*, 1975); *Jura et Bona*, (*Declaration on Euthanasia*, 1980); *Donum Vitae* (*On Respect for Human Life in its Origin*, 1987); *Uterine Isolation” and Related Matters*, (1993); *Responses to Certain Questions Concerning Artificial Nutrition and Hydration* (2007); *Dignitas Personae* (*On Certain Bioethical Questions*, 2008); *On the Banalization of Sexuality* (2010).

The Pontifical Academy of Sciences: *Why the Concept of Brain Death is Valid as a Definition of Death* (2008).

#### ADDITIONAL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS

Atkinson, Gary, M., “Theological History of Catholic Teaching on Prolonging Life”, in *Moral Responsibility in Prolonging Life Decisions*, ch. 7, ed. McCarthy & Moraczewski, (Pope John Center, St. Louis, 1981, distr. Fran. Herald Pr. Chicago).

De Marco, Donald, *The Roman Catholic Church and Abortion: An Historical Perspective*.

Sofair, André N., *et.al.* “Eugenic Sterilization and a Qualified Nazi Analogy: The United States and Germany, 1930-1945,” *Annals of Internal Medicine*, 15 Feb. 2000. Vol. 132 no. 4, pp. 312-319.

#### RECOMMENDED TEXTS

Ashley, Benedict, *et.al.*, *Health Care Ethics: A Catholic Theological Analysis*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Georgetown Univ. Press, 2006), ISBN: 9781589011168.

Coleman, Gerald, *Human Sexuality, an All-Embracing Gift*, (Alba House, 1992), ISBN: 081890643X,

Engelhardt, H. Tristram, *The Foundations of Bioethics, Second Edition*, (Oxford University Press, 1996) ISBN: 0195057368.

Finnis, John, *Moral Absolutes: Tradition, Revision and Truth*, (Catholic University of America Press, 1991).

Ford, Norman M., *When Did I Begin? Conception of the Human Individual in History, Philosophy and Science*, (Cambridge University Press, 1991), ISBN: 0521424283.

Gomez, José H. (Archbishop of Los Angeles), *A Will to Live: Clear Answers on End of Life Issues*, (Basilica Press, 2006), ISBN: 193031406X

Grisez, Germain *The Way of the Lord Jesus*, (1, *Christian Moral Principles*; 2, *Living a Christian Life*; 3, *Difficult Moral Questions*). Electronic version available on Paulist Media: *Welcome to the Catholic Church*.

Kliever, L. D. ed., *Dax’s Case, Essays in Medical Ethics and Medical Meaning*, (Southern Methodist Univ. Pr., 1989) ISBN: 0870742787

Smith, Janet, & Kaczor, Christopher, *Life Issues, Medical Choices, Questions and Answers for Catholics* (Servant Books, St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2007) ISBN: 9780867168082.

## COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS:

---

### WEEK 1:

---

#### 1. INTRODUCTION to the COURSE:

*Readings:* Course Syllabus and Course Website.

#### 2. PRINCIPLES of CATHOLIC MORAL THEOLOGY in BIOETHICS:

2.00. Relationship Between Moral Theology and Pastoral Theology: The Principle of Gradualness.

2.01. Consequentialist and Deontological Morality; Our Final End (*telos*); 2.02. Natural Law; 2.03. Double Effect; 2.04. Virtue Theory.

2.05. Formation of Conscience (*Form. Consc. Faith. Cit.* §17-18) ; 2.06. Prudence (*FCFC* §19-20) ; 2.07. Intrinsic Evil (*FCFC* §22-23) ; 2.08. Avoid Both Moral Equivalence and Misuse of Distinctions (*FCFC* §27-29) ; 2.09. Limiting Harm /Choosing Lesser Evil. (*FCFC* §31-33) ;

2.10 A Brief Glimpse at the Place of Bioethics in Current Catholic Social Teaching and Controversy (USCCB, *Twenty Questions...*)

*Readings:* Course Webpages; Austriaco, *Bioethics and Beatitude*, ch.1 pp. 7-42. May, *Catholic Bioethics* ch. 2, pp. 49-66. Ford, *The Prenatal Person: Ethics From Conception To Birth*, ch.s 1, “Morality for Persons” (pp. 1-26), and 3, “Ethical Principles for Healthcare” (pp. 41-52). USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*. USCCB, *Twenty Questions for Faithful Citizens*.

---

### WEEK 2:

---

#### 3. THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF CATHOLIC BIOETHICS

3.1. ANCIENT MEDICINE: 3.1.1. Hippocratic Texts; 3.1.2. Ancient Medical Practice; 3.1.3.

Aristotle's Embryology; 3.1.4. Roman Infanticide and Abortion; 3.1.5. Jewish Respect for Life  
*Readings:* Course Website; Jones, *The Soul of the Embryo*, ch. 1-4 (pp.1-56).

3.2. EARLY CHRISTIANITY: 3.2.1. Christ the Divine Physician; 3.2.2. Christian Devotion to Life; 3.2.3. Canonical Penalties and Theologians on Abortion and Contraception; 3.2.4. Augustine on Ensoulment and Suicide;

*Readings:* Course Website; Jones, ch. 5, pp. 57-74.

---

### WEEK 3:

---

3.3. MEDIEVAL MEDICAL CARE: 3.3.1. Compassion for the Sick; 3.3.2. Medieval Medical Practice; 3.3.3. Penitentials and Aquinas on Life and Animation; 3.3.4. Debates on Abortion

*Readings:* Course Website; Jones, ch. 8, pp. 109-125.

3.4. RENAISSANCE BIOETHICS: 3.4.1. Anatomy and Surgery; 3.4.2. Moralists on Pain and Abortion; 3.4.3. Magisterium on Abortion

*Readings:* Course Website; Atkinson, “Theological History”.

---

### WEEK 4:

---

3.5. THE 17th and 18th CENTURIES: 3.5.1. Microscopy; 3.5.2. Pharmacology; 3.5.3. Medical Dogmatism and Lay Scepticism; 3.5.4. Alphonsus Ligouri  
*Readings:* Course Website.

3.6. THE 19th CENTURY: 3.6.1. Anesthesia; 3.6.2. Antisepsis and Infectious Disease; 3.6.3. Nursing; 3.6.4. Public Health and Hygiene; 3.6.5. Medical Prestige and Paternalism; 3.6.6. Pius IX and Abortion

*Readings:* Course Website; Jones, ch. 3, pp. 72-74.

---

WEEK 5:

3.7. THE 20th CENTURY: 3.7.1. Eugenics and Pius XI (*introd.*); 3.7.2 Antimicrobials; IV Therapy; 3.7.3. Nürnberg, Informed Consent, and Pius XII (*introd.*); 3.7.4. Respirators and CPR  
*Readings:* Course Website.

3.8. MAGISTERIAL DOCUMENTS *on* BIOETHICS (*introd.*):  
*Readings:* Course Website; May, ch. 1, pp. 21-46.

---

WEEK 6:

4. EUGENICS:

*Readings:* Sofair, “Eugenic Sterilization”; May ch. 6, pp. 237-258.

---

WEEK 7:

5. INFORMED CONSENT *and* PROXY CONSENT:

*Readings:* May, ch. 6. pp. 213-228; Pope Pius XII, *Address to Histopath. Conference; The Nürnberg Code*

---

WEEK 8:

6. ABORTION:

*Readings:* Course Website; *Declaration On Procured Abortion*; May, ch. 5, pp. 165-212. “*Uterine Isolation*” *and Related Matters*.

---

WEEK 9:

7. MARRIAGE, THEOLOGY of the BODY and HUMANAE VITAE:

*Readings:* Course Website; *Humanae Vitae*; May, ch. 3, pp. 67-72.

---

WEEK 10:

8. FERTILITY and NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING:

*Readings:* Course Website; May, ch. 3, pp. 73-87.

9. ASSISTED REPRODUCTION:

*Readings:* Course Website; May, ch. 3, pp. 88-94.

---

WEEK 11:

10. IN-VITRO FERTILIZATION and PLIGHT of EMBRYOS:

*Readings:* Course Website; *Donum Vitae; Evagelium Vitae*; May, ch. 3, pp. 95-113.

11. STEM-CELL RESEARCH:

*Readings:* Course Website; May ch. 6, pp. 229-236; *Donum Vitae*.

---

WEEK 12-13:

12. EUTHANASIA:

*Readings:* Course Website; May ch. 7, pp. 259-284; *Declaration on Euthanasia*.

13. CARE *for the* UNCONSCIOUS: COMA, THE PERSIST. VEG. STATE, *and* BRAIN DEATH:

*Readings:* Course Website; May ch. 7-8, pp. 285-352; *Concept of Brain Death is Valid*.

---

WEEK 14:

14. NUTRITION *and* HYDRATION:

*Readings:* Course Website; Pope John Paul II on *The Persistent Vegetative State*;

*Nutrition and Hydration-Moral and Pastoral Reflections.* [review from prev. week:May, ch, 7, pp. 285-301]

15. PALLIATIVE CARE:

*Readings:* Pope John Paul I,I on *Palliative Care*. Additional Documents of the Magisterium on Palliative Care [*Catechism* § 2279, 1994; John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae*, 1985; Addresses of Benedict XVI 2006 & 2007; USCCB *Physician-Assisted Suicide - Threat to Improved Palliative Care* 2011] (on course website); Broeckaert, Bert, “Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide” in Walsh, *Palliative Medicine*, 1st ed., ch 21 (2008 Saunders/Elsevier); Austriaco, *Biomedicine and Beatitude*, ch.5 “Bioethics at the End of Life” (pp. 135-169, esp. pp. 167-169, “Highlighting the Role of Virtue in Bioethics” [Encouraging **hope** at the end of life:].

---

WEEK 15:

---

16. ORGAN DONATION *and* BRAIN DEATH:

*Readings:* Course Website; *Evangelium Vitae*; Pope Benedict XVI, *Address to Pontif. Acad. for Life*, 2008.

17. CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHINGS, ADVANCE DIRECTIVES, *and the* PROVISION of HEALTH CARE:

*Readings:* Course Website.